



強くてニューゲーム!

とある人気実況プレイヤーの
VRMMO奮闘記

"Tsuyokute" New Camel

主水 邑上 むくみ ほんと

無敵のプレイヤーが、
正体を隠して別キャラ作成!?

レベルは1、
パラメータは貧弱、
スキルも少ないけど――

一流のテクニックと
チートなバグ技で

最初から最強!

大人気VRMMO冒険ファンタジー、
待望の書籍化!

アルファポリス



強く

とある人気実況プレイヤーの
VRMMO奮闘記

ニューゲーム!

Teuofant's New Game!

主水 邑上

New Game Plus!

~The Struggles of a Popular VRMMO Livestreamer~

**- Volume 1 -
New Game+**

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– SYNOPSIS –

A popular Sword and Magics VRMMO that countless livestreamers play, 「Dragon's Krone」. Of the many streamers, the No. 1 most viewed player, Edogawa Ran, is so popular that he is even sponsored by a major corporation. But in real life, Ran had zero friends; a lonely highschool boy who had trouble talking to people.

Then, on a day like any other, as Ran was spending his lunch break bitterly alone, someone approached him. The girl who he adored, Ninomiya Suzu, casually walked up and said the words.

「Would you like to play Dragon's Krone together?」

Using a LV 1 character, with his previous knowledge and techniques, he is unmatched in this virtual reality world. The struggles (in order to become a Riajuu) of a certain livestreamer.



よっしー(伊藤良純)

闇の同級生。家がもの凄く金持ちで、金ですべてを解決してきた。すぐに言い寄っている。

アラン

闇が元々使っていたアバター。人気実力ともにNo.1の「侍」としてドラゴンズクロニメに君臨する。

ソーニャ

闇のサポートNPC。コンピュータとは思えないほど気遣いができる。

ウサ

アランに憧れてゲームを始めたというモーム種の「侍」。

主な登場人物

ヤマブキ(山吹)

チャラい歌謡男だが、意外と礼節をわきまえている。クラスは「騎士」。

アンドウ(安藤)

考えるより先に行動してしまう破天荒連発。クラスは「戦士」。

エドガー(江戸川)

リアルではボッチの高校生。「アラン」であることを隠して、クラスメイトとドラゴンズクロニメをプレイすることに……

メグ(佐々木恵)

すずの友人。気が強く男勝りな性格。クラスは「盗賊」。

すず(二宮すず)

闇もひそかに憧れる清楚で優しいクラスのアイドル。クラスは「聖職者」。



PROLOGUE

THIS MAN, IS A POPULAR STREAMER

In these barren wetlands, among the tall tall grass, stood a single man.

With shimmering silver hair than ran down his back, his body was covered in pure white armor that matched it in color.

In this mist-filled wetland, the visibility was low, the dampened air made it an unpleasant place to be. But, the man paid no attention to these minor details. Clearing his mind of all idle thoughts, he waited for the opportune moment.

Waiting for what resided beyond this fog, Waiting for the giant shadow to appear.

The air shook.

The man moved.

The man reached his hand out, grabbing the katana that was sheathed in the black saya on his back.

Grasping onto the hilt, he let loose the blade.

The katana's edge was so beautifully crafted that it could send chills down your spine. You would not think that it was real.

—Yes, It was not real.

That katana, the wetlands, the tall grass, and even the unpleasant atmosphere— They were all a fabrication of the mind, taking commands from a program. It was all fake.

The man stood in a virtual world, he was in the VRMMO 「Dragon's Krone」 . He was just one of it's players.

『Record it!』

In the corner of his eye, a pop-up window was displaying a message.

『OOOH, Time to get excited!』

More and more messages kept rapidly flooding in. Quickly glancing at them, the man then shifted his view to a different window.

Menu, Broadcast—

Being displayed in a new window, with a slight time-lag, was a reflection of what the man saw at this very moment.

「..... Alright, this should be OK to stream」

As the man whispered to himself, he looked in the corner of the window to see a number that was wildly multiplying.

That counter displayed the number of Listeners. It easily flew past the five digit count, and showed no signs of stopping.

That, was the amount of players that shared the same view as the man..... In other words, that number represented the number of other players where were watching the man's 「Broadcast」 .

「Okay then, Let's get things started」

『OOOOOOH! WE'VE BEEN WAITING!!』

As if signaled by the man's voice, the Listeners watching his broadcast were passionately sending in their comments.

『Eh, perhaps, are you going to fight with only that much Health?』

Reflected on the broadcast screen was what looked to be the man's Health Gauge. It was almost depleted, blinking a dangerous red color.

That red color, in short, meant that the man was already in a perilous situation.

「Of course」

In response to that comment, the man made no notion that he planned on healing.

The man instantaneously activated several Skills.

Converting damage into additional attack power, the 「Samurai」 Class Skill: 【Invincible War Technique】 ; The near-death skill that gives status boosts: 【Perseverance】 —

With a surge, red flashes surrounded the man, and from it came a power that enhanced his body to the utmost limits.

『ARE YOU SERIOUS!?!』

『HERE IT COMES, HERE IT COMES, HERE IT COMES!』

『Good Luck!』

A bustling message window.

Then, the mist swayed. The air trembled.

That was proof that the 「Enemy」 had appeared.

「.....O Foolish Little One」

From beyond the mist, came a low and ghastly voice that shook the earth.

And, two bright red eyes shone through—

With the trembling of air, the mist parted away, and stood there was a tremendous Dragon with jet-black wings.

「However, I shall praise you for making it thus fa-」

「Ah, Skip」

Interrupting the dragon's words with his own, as if time itself had stopped, the dragon's movements were frozen stiff.

『Skipping the Event Scene』

An inorganic digital voice replied back.

And just as this voice spoke, the sound of the dragon's roar pierced his ears and blew away the surrounding mist.

An exclusive skill for those of Dark Element, 【Kindred's Roar】 —

Over a few seconds, it was a fearsome skill that could cause surrounding players to lose consciousness. But it won't work on I who has the Skill 【Hearing Isolation】 .

With a tiny smirk on his face, the man kicked off the ground with his left leg.

With a bang, the mud around his feet shot up into the sky.

It happened in a single instant, but the man's figure was already nowhere to be seen.

『HERE COMES THE MOON STEPPPP!!!』

『SO COOL!』

The image being displayed to the audience changed to an aerial view where it captured both the dragon and the man.

Followed by a ring of light, the man stood before the gigantic dragon's feet.

The man cut through the dragon's boulder-like foot.

As blood flew into the air, the dragon began its counterattack.

Flapping its wings towards the sky, the dragon swung around and, using its giant tail like a whip, it aimed for the man.

The incredible shockwave produced made the air tremble, but once again the man disappeared.

『UOOHHH!! It's amazing no matter how many times I see it!』

『WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON!!』

Endless messages of praise came streaming through the pop-up window like a waterfall.

「Make sure not to blink!」

As if toying with it, the man ran past the dragon's left foot and appeared below its belly; he ran to the other side by slipping underneath it. The katana sliced through the soft underbelly, and again a whirl of blood spewed forth.

Such an intense attack violently shook the dragon's torso, its balance crumbled.

But, that was the time for the dragon to strike the man with its next attack.

Before the man's eyes, he could see flickering flames escaping from the corners of the dragon's mouth.

In the next instant, a hell-flame engulfed the wetlands, evaporating all of the surrounding moisture— An instantaneous release of 【Dragon Breath】 left the soil in ruins.

A blaze of hot air spread out. The tall grass was turned to charcoal.

As if boasting, the dragon let out a loud triumphant roar towards the heavens.

『You can't be serious!!』

『Is it..... over?』

Thinking that there was no chance of survival, unrest began spreading amongst the Listeners.

However—

『NO, THERE! ON IT'S BACK!』

『OOOOOOO!?!』

In the broadcast footage was a white shadow.

The man hung onto the dragon's back.

Piercing his katana between the black dragon's scales, he avoided the hell-fire without a scratch of damage.

「I'm not done yet!」

Trying to shake the man off it's back, the dragon went into a wild frenzy as it twisted it's body. But again, that *light* came forth.

Effortlessly weaving between the dragon's talons and fangs, splatters of blood and the ring of light danced together in the air.

It was like a giant black shadow struggling against a tiny white spirit.

『OOOOOOH!』

The camera chased after the man at blistering speeds.

Winding to the right, Dodging to the left— The dragon continued to rampage while high in the sky, but it could not separate itself from that Light.

「Haaa-!!」

The man wore a natural smile on his face as he cried out.

Sprinting atop the scales, the man evaded the dragon's attacks as he aimed for that one place. The place that controlled this giant's body; It's head.

Then, faster than it could react, reflected in the dragon's red eyes was the man; his armor formed a white wall before the dragon.

The man took his beloved katana in hand, and fluidly sealed it back in it's saya. Then, all of a sudden, a ferocious fang shot out from it.

A technique that sacrifices defense for offense, the 「Samurai」 Class skill: 【Battōjutsu】 —

Along with a glittering effect, materializing above the dragon's head was a number; a damage counter that was in the six figures.

『OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOHHHHH!!』

『HE DID IT!!!』

Sounding the end of the battle, the dragon's death cry echoed out. The enormous dragon feebly fell over and perished.

What was said to be the one of the strongest boss monsters in the VRMMO game 「Dragon's Krone」 : The Supreme Dragon Drake. This was the moment when the “Popular Livestreamer” 「Aran」 soloed it.



Footnotes:

TL note 1: Since Aran uses “Samurai Class” skills, I’ve decided to leave the “sword” and “scabbard/sheathe” as their Japanese equivalents of “Katana” and “Saya”, respectively.

There were other complex/technical terms of the Katana mentioned, like ‘Hamon’ for instance, but I translated them for clarity.

TL note 2: The first skill “Invincible War Technique” can be translated more accurately into “Kongou/Vajra Martial Arts”.

Dissecting the term, Vajra is a representation of a diamond and a thunderbolt. Together it is both Indestructible (Diamond) and with Immense Power (Thunderbolt). In a religious context, Vajra also represents “indestructible truth”. (And yes, it is spelled the same way as the Kongou-class warships. Although those were named after a mountain).

The “War Technique”/”Martial Arts” portion of the word refers to Middle Age combat techniques used by members of the military and samurai. These war techniques are not just limited to hand-to-hand but also include other forms of combat such as swords, spears, guns, horseback riding, etc.

TL note 3: Battōjutsu is the old term used to describe “The art of drawing out the sword”. Nowadays it’s called iaijutsu. While iaijutsu can be used for sport, think of Battojutsu to be the more deadly, combat orientated version.

Edit: After the author converted the prologue into digest form, she changed the skill Battojutsu into “All or Nothing”.

TL note 4: The name Aran is pronounced like Allan. I specifically chose to spell it Aran to help prove a point in a later chapter.

CHAPTER 1

THE POPULAR AND THE LONELY HIGH-SCHOOLER (PART 1)

By utilizing [Dragon's Krone]'s dedicated streaming servers, which entirely focused on distributing video content, there were a large number of 「Live Players」 who recorded their own personal footage.

Livestreaming, although it was simple and easy to view someone's stream, Dragon's Krone had implemented a system that directly benefited the streamer themselves.

That was, the ability to collect in-game currency from Listeners: A viewing fee.

Anyone who plays Dragon's Krone can purchase a 「Broadcast Limitation」 by using in-game currency. If you placed the broadcast limitation on a "Saved Broadcast", then people can only view that saved broadcast if they pay the broadcaster a viewing fee with in-game money.

This 「Livestream Game」 produced a lot of popular Web Content and, although it was a system that utilized in-game currency, this simple form of compensation was well-received among the livestreamer community. Wanting to be a part of this new wave of interest, real world companies began sponsoring popular livestream players. This gave birth to so-called "Pro Gamers".

『YOU ACTUALLY KILLED ITTT!』

『Congrats!』

『Well, didn't I say it would be easy for him?』

As Aran sheathed his beloved Katana, comments carrying words of praise flooded in one after another and filled the popup window.

Although the Listeners continued to restlessly comment, Aran took a deep breath as he sized up his prey.

The 「Supreme Dragon Drake」 that Aran had defeated, it was a diabolical boss Mob that countless players have challenged so far but all were met with despair and none have ever defeated before.

At the start of the battle it would fire out a 【Kindred's Roar】 .

Invalidating all physical attacks for a set period of time 【Centuria III】 .

Bouncing back all magic during a period of time 【Reflector III】 .

Without any cast time, a wide area explosion that caused immense damage 【Dragon Breath】 And stopping your movements with the skill 【Evasion】 .^[1]

And many more skills like those. Along with absurdly brutal abilities given to it by the developers, till this day the number of players who had successfully defeated it was completely non-existent.

And yet, that Supreme Dragon Drake was not only defeated, but it was defeated single-handedly without even teamed up in a party. As expected, after witnessing such an amazing feat before their very eyes the Listeners didn't sit back awestruck and instead sent in a frenzy of comments.

「I thought I was done for when it used the zero cast time 【Dragon Breath】 , but I somehow managed to defeat it」

With the Dragon's corpse behind him, Aran turned around and gave a smile to the camera as if taking a picture of himself.

『The Drops! What items did it drop!?!』

『Tell me what the Dragon's weak points areee!』

In the window, feverish messages kept coming in and showed no signs of stopping.

Looking at the comment window that scrolled at violent speeds, Aran reflexively closed it and removed it from his sight.

He could roughly guess the contents of those overflowing comments after all, and it was also impossible to read each and every one of them and reply on the spot.

「The key point in beating it, I guess it would be dealing with the 【Kindred's Roar】 at the start. If you don't have at least one person in your party who can use the skill 【Hearing Isolation】 then your party will crumble in an instant. After that..... Let's see, the brutal 【Dragon Breath】 and 【Evasion】. In order to lower the damage I recommend the fire resistance equipment from 『DICE』 」

‘You can buy it at my social shop so I look forward to seeing you’, Aran kindly informed them.

「DICE」, that was the name of the Men's Apparel Brand that sponsored Aran.

In exchange for financial backing, Aran was sponsored so that he could promote the brand name and the products of DICE.

And, as part of their advertisement strategy, DICE produced products that had a dual purpose in the game. They produced in-game equipment with original designs that were geared towards high level players; serving as a marketing tool while also being practically useful.

DICE was not the only company who decided to interlink their marketing strategy with Dragon's Krone.

From video game peripheral makers, to other companies like automobile makers and toy makers, a large variety of companies made contracts with and sponsored Players. Their influence in the game came in many different forms and it is still spreading even further.

Up until now there has been many failures trying to establish the relationship between 「Games and Advertisements」, but Dragon's Krone was an open environment in which marketing companies could flourish in their own different shapes and forms.

「If you want more details then please check my blog later. For those of you Listeners who haven't subscribed yet, I encourage you all to subscribe to the channel and to the e-mail magazine updates. Who know, maybe the next issue of the e-mail magazine will have a hint on how to defeat the Drake.....」

Leaving behind some superficial words, Aran energetically waved his hand.

At Aran's words the message window was once again went into a crazed frenzy, and the viewer counter started revolving at extreme speeds as if it was broken.

「Well then, May we meet again during the next broadcast. Adeus!^[2]」

Saying his usual words of farewell, Aran's figure slowly disappeared as the broadcast video faded-out.

Reflected on the broadcast screen in place of Aran, was the business Logo of DICE.

After confirming that the broadcast status had been changed from Online to Offline, Aran quietly opened the menu, and he ended today's broadcast.



With the broadcast ended, Aran withdrew from the exclusive combat Battlefield where he fought the Supreme Dragon Drake. Making use of Fast Travel, he teleported to his own private area which prevented trespassing by other players: his 「Home House」 .

With a thatched and slanted roof, the front entrance was decorated with a magnificent *Karahafu* design that would make you think 「This must've cost a hefty sum of money」 . The ambiance emitted from Aran's house would make you forget that this was a Fantasy world; it was a house that embodied the essence of a splendid and traditional Japanese Samurai's abode.^[3]

「Welcome home, Aran-sama」

When Aran set foot in the main building, he was sent a greeting from a young girl.

The person waiting for Aran at the front entrance, she had flawless white skin and long black hair. Dressing herself in a Gothic Lolita outfit, an Elf that looked as if she was the perfect depiction of a doll. Her name is Sonya.

Sonya was not a character being operated by a human player.

Assisting in the Home House Support System, helping during manufacturing and maintaining the players Social Shop. She was a Support character that could even assist the player in combat, A Non-Player Character, an NPC.

Incidentally, this support character could be customized in a variety of ways by using in-game currency or real world money. The setting of Gothic Lolita Elf was just one of Aran's preferences.

「I'm back, Sonya. Anything happen while I was gone?」

「The inventory of the display item in the Social Shop, The 『Blizzaria』 Series, has greatly diminished」

「Oh, Did it? I thought that it would sell pretty well, but still, I guess I should contact DICE and get some more stock」

「Since the end of Aran-sama's broadcast, access to the Social Shop has increased 320% from the previous day. The number of purchases total 10,654. For further details, please access the Social Shop's analysis feature in order to review it」

The Blizzaria Series, like Aran mentioned during the broadcast, was a series of equipment manufactured by DICE that possesses a high level of flame resistance.

Different from the real world, the concept of 「Stock Inventory」 does not exist in the virtual world of Dragon's Krone, but this was different story for the marketing companies. That is because, in order to determine the number of marketing goods

that could be sold as items, the real world companies have to pay the administrators of Dragon's Krone a 「Media Expense」 .

Items that are sold in-game, aside from the ones that need to be purchased with real world money, those in-game items pretty much turn players wearing them into walking billboards, so paying the Media Expense is essentially making an appeal for goods and services.

In other words, players that wear a company's goods openly advertise their brand, essentially like an in-game fashion show.

This was the main reason as to why Apparel Makers such as DICE are the primary type of company that enter into this marketing strategy. Another major factor is because Apparel Makers have a rather high affinity for using a VRMMO as a media for advertisement.

「Anything else?」

「There is one video that has yet to be uploaded. There are also 150 unread messages in your mailbox」

「Understood. Let's leave the video and messages for later..... For now, please open the item box」

「As you wish」

Sonya gave a short bow, and a new window popped up in-front of Aran's view.

In Dragon's Krone, items and money you obtain is stored in the individual player's item inventory. If you get attacked by Mobs or other players and die, then all the items in your possession get converted into Objects, and they end up as drops at the place where you died.

Items in your Inventory cannot be stolen, but once they get converted into Objects, not only can other players grab it, but even the surrounding Mobs can pick them up and retrieve them.

In other words, once you die all those items are lost. As a means of insurance against such an event happening, each player has an item storage-place in their Home House known as an 「Item Box」 .

「Let's see here」

Looking over the numerous items dropped by the Supreme Dragon Drake, Aran's eyes were sparking as he chuckled to himself.

「Drake's Scale」 and 「Dragon's Fat」 , 「Jet-Black Horn」 and 「Kindred's Blood」 .

Each and every one of them were of the highest rarity; 「Legendary Class」 materials.

If key items are also among the ingredients, then the shops in town should be selling a Recipe for them. With that Recipe you can manufacture weapons and armor. It would be best if they could be made into equipment for my class, 「Samurai」 , though.

While daydreaming about making all-power equipment, before logging out, Aran took a look at the shop and confirmed the inventory. Thinking of the fun times to be had next time he logs in, Aran transferred the items from his Inventory to the Item Box, and then he opened up the 「Rankings」 window.

「Displaying the Rankings」

Along with Sonya's announcement, a list of Players was being displayed—

This was, a Rankings list for streams based on their viewer count.

In Dragon's Krone where livestreaming was heavily endorsed, the game's greatest players, they could easily be identified by looking at the highest ranked streamers on this Rankings list.

The most skilled players will naturally attract viewers to their livestream. Other than looking at how high their character's Level is, this was another method to measure the true strength of a Player.

「No change in the lower rankings, huh」

Sliding past the ranking to see the top 30, the display soon stopped on the names of the Top Ranking Players.

「As usual, Aran-sama is number 1 in the daily rankings」

「Well, of course I am」

「How magnificent. As expected of Aran-sama」

With a slight grin on his face, Sonya's words of praise only elevated Aran's mood.

On the monitor was the number of viewers for his broadcast; it surpassed the 2nd ranked player's view count by almost two-fold.

Up until yesterday there wasn't that much of a gap between 1st and 2nd, but this must be due to the subjugation of the Supreme Dragon Drake.

Even so, he couldn't let his guard down.

The current No. 2 Ranked Player 「Cloche^[4]」 was a Female Player.

Her technique and skills were of the highest level. And on top it all, she was a Cool Beauty so she gathered a rather large fan-base. As proof of that, apparently the Apparel Brand that sponsored Cloche reportedly had a massive increase in sales ever since they brought her on-board for advertising.

If you are wondering why I know so much about her, it is because I, too, am one of her fans.

「Open the Mailbox」

「As you wish」

Having done a rough scan of across the Rankings list, Aran began operating the Mailbox.

A new window popped up, and all the mails that have piled up were being received one after another.

「The mail have been filtered and the one's deemed dangerous have been marked for deletion. If any of those mails look important, then please exclude them from the filter and transfer them to the inbox」

「You're a lifesaver」

The majority of the 150 unread mails were from messages from fans who saw the stream or read the blog.

There are some messages among them that had offensive language, but since Aran planned on personally replying to every single mail individually when he got the time, he separated them and placed them in the box labeled 「Players」 .

Since he was sponsored by DICE, he couldn't just rudely ignore any message. One day, it might be better if he used Sonya's automated reply function to help deal with them though.

「Next is.....」

Swiftly readjusting his gaze, all that was left were suspicious looking mails from unknown senders that Sonya had marked for deletion.

In Dragon's Krone, there has been an increasing number of problems where Players who are sponsored by companies get maliciously harassed.

This is known as 「Account Hacking」 .

Account Hacking is just what it seems like, it is a method by which people illegally obtain your Dragon's Krone account information. It has gotten to the point where Players who illegally obtain account information are subject to criminal charges.

Account Hacking comes in many different forms, but the most common one is hacking through mail.

They attach an item to the mail, and once it gets opened it installs backdoor malware (an illegal program) into the VR console. The next time you Login, they steal away your account info.

As a result, before you send an attachment in Dragon's Krone, it is common courtesy to confirm through voice chat that you really did send it. As such, for suspicious looking mails that Aran wasn't contacted about, he simply threw them into the trash bin without even reading the text.

「By the way Aran-sama, is it really okay that you haven't logged out yet?」

「Eh? Ah, crap, it's already this late」

The clock on the edge of the display was showing that the time was close to 10 pm.

After this he will have to update his blog and edit today's livebroadcast before putting it in the archives; this will take about 30 more minutes. Even if he logged out now, it he wouldn't be able to go to bed until about 11 pm.

「.....Seriously, this sucks」

Aran grumbled those words.

In the real world his expression was scanned and the face of Aran's avatar changed to that of a frown, as if exposing the displeasure nestled deep in his heart.

The thing that Aran found annoying, it wasn't having to update his blog or having to upload the video to the archives.

For him it was the most detestable thing— It was the signal that he had to separate from this world; the signal that he had to return to “Reality”.

「*Haaa*..... I *really* don't want to go to **school**」

During his livestreams Aran's true appearance was never shown.

In the world of Dragon's Krone, Aran was an extremely popular livestream player; so popular that there is probably no one who didn't know his name.

The number of other players who just want to be his acquaintance are as countless as the number of stars in the universe. If Aran sent out applications to players who wanted to go hunting together with him, then most likely an insane number of applications would come rushing in to the point where they couldn't even be processed.

However, in the real world he was nothing like this.

Here in the real world, even if he tried to gather people together— No one would come.

In the real world, Aran was “Edogawa Ran”; a high schooler..... and in addition he had absolutely no friends; a high schooler that could otherwise be called a 「Loner」 .^[5]

「Try your best, Aran-sama. Sonya will always be here for you, awaiting as I look forward to Aran-sama's return」

「Sonya.....」

In a graceful manner, linking her hands in front, Sonya gave Aran a warm smile.

Sonya's words, they were like blessed rain falling down onto this parched and dry desert. They spread out and permeated deep into Ran's soul.

A Loner High-schooler, for someone like Ran, Sonya was an irreplaceable refuge of 「Healing Comfort」 .

Footnotes:

1. TL note: A Centurion is a professional soldier in the ancient Roman army. The kind of shield they used were vertically long shields called Scutum. I assume the skill “Centuria III” is a reference to those types of shields.

Also note: although one of the Dragon’s skills is called “Evasion” it does not help the dragon evade, but instead stops/hinders the movement’s of the players. Kinda the opposite of what you think “evasion” would mean.

2. TL note: Adeus is Portuguese for “good-bye”. In the original text there is furigana that says that Adeus is supposed to mean “See you later”.

3. TL note: Here’s a good reference to what Aran house might look like. [Picture Here](#). A Karahafu design is the “triangle” part of the front entrance.

4. TL note: “Cloche” is a French word which means “Bell” in English. The name in Romaji for “Cloche” is “Kuroshie”.

I am debating if I should use Kuroshie or Cloche for her name so yea... I really want to put Cloche since it has some significant later in the story but it sounds weird so Maybe I’ll make a poll down the line for readers to choose.

5. TL note: The Kanji for “Ran” means “Orchid”. In flower language an Orchid is a symbol of perfection and wealth... Not sure if it applies in this case though. Ran is probably more related to the name Aran.

CHAPTER 2

THE POPULAR AND THE LONELY HIGH-SCHOOLER (PART 2)

For Aran, For Edogawa Ran, it has been 3 years since he came across the world of Dragon's Krone.

By nature, Ran was a person who preferred to do things alone. Since he had few friends, once Ran heard about the grand unveiling of the VR console 「UnChain」 he was instantly hooked.

A new device that constructed a virtual world directly in your brain, 「UnChain」. By giving specific stimulation to the 5 senses, it could create a visual using your sensory organs and project the image into your mind; a new kind of 「Brain Machine-Interface」.

Attached to a reclining chair was a hood that contained the relatively small VR console UnChain. Sitting down in the chair, if you booted up the main device then you could immediately Dive into a virtual world.

Being a device that defied our common perception of the future, mass media was in a big fuss about it. Up until now other attempts with technologies involving naked eye 3D imaging and AR (Augmented Reality) have been met with a multitude of failures. There were many who thought that UnChain would follow down the same path and most held cold-hearted opinions of it.

However, the introduction of a certain “application” made all the naysayers do an about-face.

That application was developed alongside the UnChain-Project, It was the game application 「Dragon's Krone」.

In the game you become an Avatar, it was a virtual fantasy world with swords and magic. Appealing to both casual and hardcore players, gaming fans were all captivated by it. Dragon's Krone caused UnChain to become popularly widespread, and this gave rise to the sensation known as the VR Boom.

「Haaa.....」

In a certain remote prefecture was Kasumigaoka High-School. During lunch break, in a classroom filled with cheerful laughter, left all alone by himself was a young man breathing a heavy sigh.

This was a sight you would never imagine if you came from the game world; the sight of the pitiful 「Loner」 Edogawa Ran.

In the world of Dragon's Krone, a tall figure with silver hair, and with genderless facial features, he possessed a beautiful form that like a painted picture. But for the Ran in the real world this did not hold true. His looks were nothing special, just your average boy with black rimmed glasses.

During their 2nd year, the students were shuffled into new classrooms and half a year has passed since.

The people in the surroundings had already formed groups, but for Ran the number of students gathered around him– was Zero.

For Ran who only ever tasted bitterness during lunch time, being here made him feel like a snail desperately trying to cling on to a rocky surface. This was his daily routine, patiently enduring while lying motionless.

「2 more periods..... Only 2 more periods and it will finally be over」

Ran absentmindedly looked over towards the window. As if offering up his prayers, he whispered those words to himself.

Once I get home I will check out what equipment could be made from the Drake's raw materials. If there's something worthy of crafting then let's immediately shut ourselves in the crafting room.

Oh yea, that's right, before I do that I have to contact DICE and make a request for more of the Blizzaria Sets^[1].

Based on my conversation with Sonya it seems like there might be a boom in sales, so it would be best if I sent a mail to the people in charge at DICE to let them know ahead of time.

Thinking about those things, Ran quietly took out his smartphone. In order to contact DICE he opened up their Dragon's Krone "My Page" that he had bookmarked.

「Hey, did you see yesterday's broadcast?」

Just then, suddenly reaching Ran's ears, was the conversation of one of his classmates.

「Broadcast..... You mean Aran's broadcast? Of course I did. It was awesome huh」

「Totally. Ya know, I almost ended up screaming」

The topic of his classmate's conversation, was Dragon's Krone..... and moreover it was a conversation about Ran's other half, Aran. Because Dragon's Krone did not have any age restriction, there were many Players in high-school. The fact that there were Players among his classmates, this was well known to Ran.

「Did ya hear? According to the rumors, Aran is a high-schooler just like us, you know that?」

「Eh, seriously? He must be getting a ton of money from DICE, Aran that is」

「Being able to make money from a game.....It makes me totally jealous」

The two were having an interesting conversation. But for Ran who didn't have the courage or the guts to join in on their conversation, he continued on as usual and sat there quietly, only listening with perched ears.

「But ya know, with such insane skills and techniques like that, He must be a complete game addict^[2] huh」

「Probably. Even if you earn money, to sacrifice your personal life like that... It sort of makes him pitiful huh」

「..... ツ!」 [3]

Due to the two's conversation making an unexpected turn, Ran unintentionally showed a frown on his face.

Hmph, if you want to speak ill of me then do so all you like. You and I live in two different worlds.

It's true what you said, in the real world I am socially challenged and can only do things like eavesdrop on my classmates' conversations. But, in the other world, I have many things that money can't buy.

Also, the one thing that I won't **ever** do is talk to you about Dragon's Krone.

I, I play Dragon's Krone too. "Ohh, what's the name of your character?" Well, the name's Aran but—

It's true if I did something like that then I might gain some people who seem like friends. But if you knew that I was Aran then what kind of things will you demand from me?

By becoming Aran's friend you probably just want to feel superior to others, or perhaps you want my knowledge, or maybe— they probably want money.

Really, it's completely absurd.

That's why I don't want any friends in the real world. Friends are Unnecessary.

「Andou-kun, Yamabuki-kun」

As Ran talked to himself in his heart, in that moment, the once heavy and gloomy aura in the room gradually started to transform.

The atmosphere was so different that you might have thought that a spring breeze was blowing through the classroom. The clear voice of a young girl brushed against Ran's ear.

Ran involuntarily shifted his gaze to the source of that sound and what met his eyes was, being illuminated by the radiant sunlight shining through the window, a female student with long chestnut hair and big round eyes—

Wearing a blazer, one could say that it was an image perfectly befitting of a female student. She was 「Ninomiya Suzu」 .

「Oh, Ninomiya-san」

「Umm.....Regarding the thing from before, did finish looking?」

While slightly leaning to the side, she called out to the two male students who were having a heated conversation about Aran.

Gently using her pinky to comb aside her ruffled hair, the gesture was so sensuous that you wouldn't think she was someone their own age.

Immediately averting his gaze from her, Ran's pulse had quickly escalated.

Because of the 2nd year class shuffle, Ran and Suzu were now in the same class.

Suzu was, despite being reserved and somewhat of a late bloomer, she was a girl who earnestly tried her best at everything she did. Although it was nothing extraordinary, her looks were refreshing and charming. With a polite and calming ambiance about her, she was a student who embodied the words 「Fair Beauty」 . Many students both male and female were captivated by her.

Ran, her loner classmate who was always in the background, was also one of these people.

「Oh, that's right. Sorry. Not yet」

「It doesn't matter when for me, but Megu keeps going on and on saying that we'll do it today. The Members, do you think you can find them?」

「Eh, by today? For the Grand Mission」

The male student known as Andou casually threw out a certain terminology. Once he heard it, Ran's heart leapt into his throat.

.....Just now, did he say 「*Grand Mission*」 ?

By Grand Mission... there's no way that they could be talking about the Grand Mission in Dragon's Krone right?

Gathering together a large amount of players at once, all of them would try to complete the same quest, The 「Grand Mission」 . There should've been an announcement saying it would start soon but.....

「Was there anyone else from the other classes who played Dragon's Krone?」

「Well ya know, there are some, but they probably already joined some other party right?」

「Someone who's still left... I'm sure there must be at least one person」

Saying “Let's go through them one by one,” Andou and Yamabuki began naming off students in alphabetical order.

Egashira, Igarashi, Inoue, Uchida, Katou—

However, the name “Ran” did not come from their mouths, and they continued down the attendance list until they reached the last name 「Watanabe」 .

「.....Nope, can't think of any」

「Wonder what we should do~」

Little by little the mood coming from the two seemed like they gave up hope. Ran was desperately trying to hold down his beating heart that felt like it was about to explode. Judging by their conversation, that means that Ninomiya-san played Dragon's Krone. If so, then the same could be said for the other two classmates—

「Ninomiya-san, is there really no way other than searching in other classes?」

「.....Yeah, it might be a bit difficult. Megu^[4] keeps insisting that she doesn't want to do it unless it's with people we know..... Sorry for being a bit selfish」

「I know what ya mean. I wonder if there really ain't some other guy who plays too」

Right here.

There's a classmate who plays Dragon's Krone sitting right here.

Completely forgetting that he had just declared in his heart 「Friends are unnecessary」, Ran was nervously squirming as if he wanted them to invite him.

But, although things could be swiftly settled if he simply just raised his hand at that moment, Ran was a true-born loner with a communication problem.

In his mind he thought that even if he did something so grandiose such as raising his hand, surely his voice would not reach those two.

There would always remain that one meter distance. Ran would never be able to close the distance between him and Suzu's group even if space itself became warped.

As if ridiculing Ran, the sound of other students having fun and laughing came through the window.

The time would soon come for lunch break to end.

The lunch break that Ran desired to end would soon be over—

However, today's lunch break was different from all the others.

「Uhhh.....You're Edogawa-kun.....Right?」

Gently, those few words came from the voice of Suzu.

And, from her mouth came, as if answering his cursed prayers of 「Invite Me」 , she called out Ran's name——

「*Fuee!*?」

Honestly believing that his name would never be called out, letting out a hysterical voice, Ran so vigorously turned his neck that it might snap off.

Maybe I heard it wrong, Ran thought for a second.

However, facing him was the gaze of Suzu, informing him that he was indeed not mistaken.

「Edogawa-kun, perhaps, do you play Dragon's Krone?」

「.....eh?」

An unsightly voice crack came from Ran.

In spite of them not once having spoken to each other before, Ran could not hide the shock he received from finding out that Suzu actually knew his name. But, the question that came out of her mouth struck Ran with an even heavier blow.

「Huh, are you serious?」

As Ran and Ninomiya Suzu were mutually facing each other, Andou called out while looking doubtful.

「Edogawa..... You play? Wait, why does Ninomiya-san know that?」

「Well, look, his smartphone」

「Smartphone? Oh, I see.....」

Suzu pointed her finger at the screen of the smartphone that Ran was holding in his hand.

Displayed on that screen, was a “My Page” from the Dragon’s Krone website.

The moment the three’s gaze turned towards his smartphone, Ran immediately tried to delete the image from his screen... but he was too late.

「You seriously play Dragon’s Krone!? There’s absolutely *no way* I would’ve guessed
」

「If you are viewing a My Page, Edogawa-kun, then that means you have a Dragon’s Krone account, right? 」

「.....Uuu」

As if he was a mole being dragged out from underground, Ran, who suddenly found himself as the center of attention, was frantically looking around in a panic.

Somehow, aren’t I in a *whole lot* of trouble right now?

By showing off a My Page like that, it looks as if I wanted them to invite me.

「But ya know..... If you really do play the I guess you’d be good enough」

「Yeah. But you’re right, we can’t go on without making some sacrifices」

「.....ッ!」

These guys..... They keep saying 「But」 , what the hell is that 「But」 suppose to mean.

I don't come cheap you know.

Up until now I wasn't sure if I was going to join in or not, but now I know for sure that I'll refuse.

「Hey, Edogawa-kun」

「Y-yes」

But, again, brushing against his ear was the soothing voice of Suzu.

Just like she did before when she called out to Andou and Yamabuki, Suzu leaned forward slightly with her head tilted to the side.

Not for anyone else, that gesture was done only for him. The dark angry cloud that was swirling around in Ran's mind, like clear mist descending on the water's surface, that dark cloud was blown away and everything became pure white.

「If you would like, that is, if you don't mind」

Suddenly finding Suzu directly in front of him, Ran's pulse hastened even quicker, his throat instantly became dry and scratchy.

And, without noticing Ran's panicked state, Suzu continued.

「Would you like to play Dragon's Krone together with us?」

Signalling the end of lunch, the bell let out a high pitched chime.

That chime, as if annoyingly clear, as if urging him onward, it resonated throughout the classroom.

「Gladly」

Frozen on the spot, Ran stiffly nodded his head.

This lunch break that he always wanted to end, the lunch break where he thought only brought pain and anguish, today he experienced the start of his high-school life. And this is only the beginning.

Footnotes:

1. TL note: In the last chapter I accidentally translated [Blizzaria] as “Blizzard”. Blizzaria is the correct translation and I corrected it in chapter 1 already.
2. TL note: The original word for “game addict” is written as “Invalid/Disabled Player”. In context, an Invalid Player is someone who is so addicted to games that it gets in the way of their daily lives, to the point where it is considered an “obstacle” and a “hindrance” to their every day living. It basically turns them into non-functioning people of society, like a NEET (although he still works and goes to school).
3. TL note: The ツ! is a glottal stop which actually doesn’t make a sound. Think of it as “the sound of surprise” or like a random exclamation point appearing on the person’s head. There will be a lot of there’s in future chapters.
4. TL note: Normally Megu would be translated as “Meg” but I refuse to use that name so I will go with Megu. Even moreso because it is a nickname.

CHAPTER 3

SUB-CHARACTER

When I came to my senses, I was already at home.

After Ninomiya-san called out to me, although I have absolutely no idea what I said in reply, in the end today I, it ended up with me playing Dragon's Krone with Ninomiya-san and the others.

You can't be serious. **Me** playing Dragon's Krone with people I know in real life, I will be doing that...

To be completely honest..... I'd rather not have the real world encroach onto the world that I live in.

Even though it should've been impossible, Even though I've never even spoken to those classmates before..... but playing together with *that* Ninomiya-san...

—Isn't that something to be happy about?

「Why do you have a giant grin on your face? It's kinda creepy」

「.....ツ!!」

Being suddenly called out to, Ran's body instantly froze up.

Standing in the 2nd floor hallway of his house, with short cut hair and healthy skin that was tanned by the sun's rays, and wearing a sleeveless shirt that matched his toned body, his brother who was the polar opposite of Ran. He was Igusa^[1].

「Did something good happen to you?」

「N-No, not really」

Shit. I was totally caught off-guard.

Ran tried to conceal his broad smile by returning his face to the usual blunt and unsociable appearance.

「Hmm~, Well I guess that's fine. The fridge downstairs is out of drinks you see. Is it alright if I grab one from your's?」

「Sure. More like, it's fine to grab some whenever you want, you know? I always keep telling you that」

「Well~, just waltzing into the room of a growing boy is a bit awkward. Also, you're room, there's a bunch of things I can't go touching, right? 」

As I insisted that the *only* thing in there that couldn't be touched was machinery, Igusa was loudly chuckling as he replied.

Although Ran and Igusa were not all that close as siblings, Igusa was one of the few people in the real world that Ran could have a genuine conversation with.

「By the way, are you in good shape? With 'That' I mean」

「'That'?」

「You know, That」

Taking out a water bottle from the double-door refrigerator, Igusa pointed at the VR Console UnChain that took up the majority of Ran's room.

「Well, good enough that I won't get dropped by my sponsor」

「That so. Even though you're quite a big source of income for this family, don't get too wrapped up in it okay?」

The financial support coming from DICE, as Ran was still under-aged, it was being deposited into his parent's bank account.

Of course, unlike the usual parents who 「Hang on to the New Year's money you get from relatives」, the money was used to pay for the maintenance cost of the UnChain console and other things related to Dragon's Krone. In addition it was used on a PC used for editing videos and updating his blog, books and magazines used for to take a breather, and purchasing movies and anime. Ran was allowed to use it on anything he wanted.

But even still, the financial support from DICE was enough to pay for the Edogawa family's mortgage three times over and they would still be left with a surplus. It was a true fact that Ran played a large role in his family's finances.

「Aniki, are you interested in trying it too? You already found a job, so I'm sure you have plenty of free time」

「Me? Nah, no way. I suck at games after all. I'm more of the type who likes to move my body around」

Aniki's hobbies included surfing, snowboarding, and road biking.

Earlier he even said that he joined a futsal team^[2].

「I, I won't force it on you or anything, but if you want to then let me know」

「If I want to huh..... You, will you buy another one? One of these」

「If Aniki really wants to」

「Nah~, if I caused so much trouble for my little bro then I won't be able to hold face. Let's keep things as they are, the only think I need from you would be these drinks」

With a smile, Igusa said “Thanks for the drink~” and he left Ran’s room.

Responding with “You’re welcome,” Ran watched his back while feeling somewhat envious.

Ran, himself, would never go out of his way to invite someone else to play Dragon’s Krone with him, but Igusa was different.

Different from the indoors (or rather, the shut-in) Ran, Igusa had a preference for the outdoors. Maybe he was just good at being considerate, but rather than considering Ran as 「The little brother who’s a popular livestreamer sponsored by a company」 and boasting to others about it, and rather than looking at him with scorn and disgust, Igusa treated Ran just like an ordinary little brother. At the very least, this made Ran’s heart feel at ease whenever he was with Igusa.

「.....Well, enough of that」

Ran remembered that he was currently at his wits end trying to deal with things. There was no time to worry about Igusa.

Would you, like to play Dragon’s Krone together with us—

Once again recalling Suzu’s soft voice, a myriad of wild delusions began to run rampant in Ran’s mind.

Although there were the names of 2 troublesome male students, and another female student joining them, Ran would be meeting Ninomiya-san in the world of Dragon’s Krone.

If it was just Andou and Yamabuki then there was no way this would ever happen.

But, the person who asked me was not them, it was Ninomiya-san.

That would mean, Ninomiya-san doesn’t view me as the 「The disgusting classmate who should be ignored」 but instead as the 「Well, it wouldn’t seem like any harm so why not play the game together」 , she sees me as that level of a classmate.

「.....Yeah, it must be something like that」

As his delusions continued to spring forth, Ran's expression grew looser.

But, if Ninomiya-san seems me as a classmate on the level of 「It should be fine to play the game together」 Then did she really have to go and invite me, a man, by herself?

No, if I were Ninomiya-san then there's no way I would invite me.

If she personally invited me, then that means 「I, I always wanted to talk with Edogawa-kun」 Doesn't that mean that I'm on **that** level of classmate?

「This is, perhaps..... Does this mean that I'm close to my debut as a Riajuu^[3]?」

Being pulled left and right by his wild delusion, Ran made great strides to finally arrive at a common ground.

And so, suddenly filled with enthusiasm, Ran hopped out of bed and, like a pilot scrambling into the cockpit, he slid right into the chair that housed UnChain.

It was as if he had just entered DEFCON 1.

The time that Ninomiya-san had set for them all to meet was in One Hour. The rendezvous destination would be in the beginning town 「Crescendo」 . Yesterday Ran logged out in his Home House, so he had to hurry up and Fast Travel there—

「.....Aa」

Lowering the hood of the reclining chair, as he was about to boot up UnChain, Ran brought his hands to a stop.

「Wait, my Character, what should I do about that」

In order to play Dragon's Krone with Ninomiya-san (and her other friends who were just hindrances) obviously an in-game avatar was necessary. My Avatar, I only have Aran to choose from.

For a second, Ran thought of logging in as Aran, but he quickly dismissed the idea.

If they found out that I was Aran then things will end up getting troublesome. It would probably be fine for Ninomiya-san, but if the others found out then they would most likely try to demand many things from me.

If they were only people that he met online then he might be able to manage something, but since they were classmates that he would see everyday at school, it probably won't be possible to run away from them.

.....What a troublesome bunch.

If it's only clearing the Grand Mission, then just I alone should be enough to accompany Ninomiya-san.

「Can't be helped. I guess I should make a new character huh. Well, it's in order to find out why Ninomiya-san invited me on the Grand Mission after all, and it would be best to have a character that's close to their level.....」

Thus, as he was saying those words to himself, Ran once again stopped his hands.

And then, the multitude of delusions in Ran's mind were suddenly blown out of the water.

The reason why I was asked to participate in the Grand Mission—

That's right. The reason why Ninomiya-san called out to me, it was in order to gather the minimum amount of members necessary to participate in the Grand Mission. As it were, I was only there to balance out the numbers.

In other words, after we finish the Grand Mission, Me and Ninomiya-san will no longer be 「People who play Dragon's Krone together」 but instead we will return to being 「just classmates」 .

What the hell...

Rather than 「I want to talk with Edogawa-kun」 it was more like 「In order to participate in the Grand Mission, I'll put up with having to deal with the gross Edogawa-kun」 , doesn't that make me the lowest of the low?

「..... *Haaa*..... Now I *really* don't want to go」

Abruptly losing all of his motivation, Ran breathed a heavy sigh.

Maybe he should just ignore the others, Ran was thinking of logging in as Aran and taking a nice stroll around.

All the better if Sonya was there for him, doing her best to cheer him on.

As if finally resolving himself, Ran pushed the switch and powered on UnChain.

『Welcome, To a World Not Bound By Limits』

Along with an announcement, Ran's consciousness slowly began to fade.

An optical hallucination as if his body was slowly sinking into the ground.

In the distance, a light from somewhere was flickering.

This was something that he had experienced a countless number of times, The entrance to the world of virtual reality.

『ID and Password confirmed. Welcome back, Edogawa-sama. Activating the application “Dragon’s Krone”』

With a flash, he felt the sensation of passing through a tunnel.

At the same time, he body was suspended in the heavenly sky. His body took the full brunt of the wind, the sweet scent of the trees and the Earth reached his senses.

『Please Select Your Character』

Reflected in front of Ran was Aran, the avatar that logged out of his Home House last night.

However, Ran just stood there silently without confirming his 「Decision」 .

At that time, He was recalling the dazzling smile of Suzu who earnestly looked at him back in the classroom.

Even if it was just to balance out the numbers, Ninomiya-san..... That Ninomiya-san, she was counting on me——

「..... Fuck it. I’ve decided」

A light sensation came from Ran’s body, and he flew far off into the distance to a certain city.

What came into his view was not the sight of his Home House, but the city that all new players visit upon their arrival, the city of 「Crescendo」 ——

『Creating a New Character』

Reflected in front of Ran's eyes, was the nostalgic sight of the character creation screen.



Dragon's Krone had more or less of an overarching story. By clearing the quests given to you, it was possible to pursue down the storyline.

After being attacked by the Dragons, many countries suffered great losses. The rulers of those countries called out to the Players, called out to The 「Dragon Hunters」, and they requested that the Dragons be subjugated. The story went something like that.

『In order to live in the world of Dragon's Krone, an Avatar will be created. After it is created changes cannot be made, so be careful in your decision』

After being politely guided by a female voice, an inorganic surface appeared, and standing on top of it the figure of an Avatar.

This was the “Me” in this virtual world.

Presently, the figure was displaying the default settings, but it was possible to change and customize the Avatar to anyway you see fit.

The hairstyle, down to the color of the hair, to the eyes and mouth, shape of the nose, the overall silhouette and even the placement of the cheekbones. It was possible to modify and change a large variety of characteristics.

However, Ran did not tamper with those settings at all.

「Load an image of my body from a 3D Scan」

『Command Confirmed. Activating the UnChain Scanner. Please wait one moment』

And so, after a short time had passed, a bubble of light enveloped the Avatar and changed it's shape.

It was as if a replica of the real world Ran had appeared, it was a somewhat plain Avatar that didn't stand out much.

I'll end up immediately deleting it later, so it should be fine as it is.

『Is the current setting all right?』

「Okay」

『.....The settings for your Avatar has been established. Please Enter Your Name』

Being asked the next question by the announcer, Ran stopped for a while to think.

It might be fine to just go with 「Ran」, but that is a bit too similar to Aran, so I'll pass on something so direct like that.

As such, I'll also pass on the name 「Edogawa」.

Edogawa.....edogawa.....edoga.....

「..... In Katakana, the name 『Edgar』」

『“Edgar”. Understood..... It is possible to create that name. Is this name all right?』

It was the same way with Aran, but quite honestly I have zero naming sense.^[4]

Letting out a small sigh, it was now impossible to separate the real world Ran from his virtual reality self.

「Okay」

『Your Avatar has been created. Lastly, Please choose your Class』

Surrounding Ran in a circle were a number of small avatars who looked similar to his own.

All of them were clothed in extravagant equipment that were exclusive to each Character—

In terms of Character Creating, this was the most important setting: Selecting a Class.

From the orthodox attack class there was the 「Fighter」, and the class that specializing in mid-to-long distance attacks 「Wizard」. The occupation which provided healing 「Cleric」, and the class that could call forth many spirits 「Summoner」 —

The various avatars were swirling around Ran, but without hesitation he stopped the rotation on a single class.

The Class: 「Samurai」 —

It was the same class as his main character Aran; a class that focused on dealing massive amounts of burst damage by using powerful attacks.

In Dragon's Krone, unlike your average RPG game, it was an MMO that had a high amount of fast paced action.

Especially during a battle, you weren't able to casually open up your menu, and without any signal such as 「It is Now Your Turn」, the situations were always changing in real-time.

Rather than your normal action RPG^[5] that only gave you an instant to make a decision, Dragon's Krone was closer to a Fighting Game, but because of that it allowed for the fostering of individual technique. Of course this also applied to battles against Mobs, but this meant that even if your character level was low it was possible to compete against other individuals as long as you made use of higher level techniques.

Since this Avatar was fated to be deleted on completion of the Grand Mission, Ran figured that it would be best to choose the same class as his main character in order to make full use of his knowledge and practical skills.

『Settings Complete. Now then, Let us journey to the world of “Dragon’s Krone”』

Again, with a light sensation, Ran’s body was assaulted with the feeling of being suspended. Ran’s vision narrowed, and as if he was being sucked inside, he flew into the Avatar in front of him.

For a while, all was dark.

And then, he felt as chill as if he was plummeting from above.

『Welcome to Dragon’s Krone』

Along with the heavy sensation of his feet hitting the ground, Ran’s Avatar 「Edgar」 now stood in the familiar world of Dragon’s Krone.

Footnotes:

1. TL note: Igusa's name is the flowering plant *Juncus effusus* and is commonly known as Soft Rush or Common Rush. It is the type of plant that is used to weave tatami mats and sometimes grows near the waters edge (keeping in mind that is last name is Edogawa like the river).

Like Ran (who's name is orchid), he is named after a flowering plant but Common Rush is more widespread and can grow in various places, sometimes becoming an invasive species in farm lands. Serves as a good contrast huh.

2. TL note: For those of you who don't know, Futsal is like small scale indoor soccer/football.

3. TL note: A Riajuu is someone who "has a fulfilling and successful life (outside of the internet)". In general it is used as a term for the opposite of an otaku.

4. TL note: The name Edgar comes from Ran's last name of Edogawa. Instead of Edogawa he changed it to Edoga-R.

In a similar fashion, Aran is just "A + Ran"

5. TL note: This last part that said "Action RPG" was spelled as Action PRG in the original text. I assume this was a typo so I made the fix (unless PRG is suppose to mean program or something). There are other typos in the early chapters but I'll point them out regardless.

CHAPTER 4

OUR FIRST GRAND MISSION (PART 1)

What met Edgar's eyes, was a nostalgic landscape.

This was the first town you visited after descending into Dragon's Krone, The City of Crescendo.

Crescendo was located in the southern portion of the Dragon's Krone world; a small port city built atop sandy hills.

The setting was that the Players washed up on the shores of this port city Crescendo and are foreigners to this land. After learning the basics Players would then leave this city, and then become employed as Dragon Hunters by some far off country.

「Sure brings back memories」

The moist air.

The wind carrying to scent of salt.

Numerous fishing boats casting off into the sea.

I haven't been in this town for a long long time. But, even if I haven't visited this place in ages, the people of this port city never change.

「Well then. Before I get all sentimental」

After taking in his surroundings, Edgar looked in the lower corner of his view to see a clock being displayed.

There was in-game time, and the real-world time.

I've still got a while before I have to meet up with Ninomiya-san and the others. Although it should be fine if I just sat here and waited for them, I guess it would be better to make some preparations first.

The Grand Mission, it was a quest that required a party and involved team combat.

Unlike when you are in the Field or in a Dungeon, Factions banded together and tried to defeat a common enemy. The goal was to take down the Boss Mob. Four parties would be participating at once and your reward changed based on your team's performance. Depending on number of enemies you defeated and how much damage you did to the Boss Mob, your party's rank at the end of the Mission will determine what reward you get.

The most essential parts of the Grand Mission was quickly defeating the smaller Mobs, and making your way to the Boss Mob.

In other words, the focal point of this strategy would be how quickly you can recover the damage you receive on the way, and how fast you can proceed forward.

Naturally, one would think that the job of healing should fall to a Cleric, but that actually had the opposite effect and instead leads to a time loss.

Taking into consideration the incantation time of healing magic and the time it takes to refill the 「Stamina Gauge」 used to cast it in the first place, Clerics are better off focusing their efforts on weakening Mobs with debuffs and strengthening allies with buffs instead. Healing during battle, it's best if you handle that yourself.

Therefore the most essential thing, was to have a sufficient amount of self-healing items.

It's best if we stocked up on a lot of those recovery items.

「To The Home House」

In response to Edgar's voice, a menu opened up, and he chose the Home House option.

In an instant his vision was shrouded in light. Edgar Fast Traveled to his Home House



「Welcome Home, Edgar-sama」

When Edgar arrived at the Home House by using Fast Travel, with her white limbs radiantly contrasting against her black Gothic Lolita outfit, the beautiful female elf, Sonya, was waiting for him.

「I'm back, Sonya」

「How unusual for you to log in with a sub-character」

「There's some things I have to deal with you see」

「Oh my, that must be very difficult. If there is anything that I can assist you with then please feel free to inform me」

Seeing Sonya's smiling face as she said that, Edgar also found his cheeks loosen into a small smile.

The fact that Sonya was in the Home House of the Sub-Character Edgar was by no mere accident.

As an NPC who supports the players, only 1 NPC was assigned to each individual player's account.

「Sonya, this is honestly my first time using a sub-character. So, is it possible to take items from the other side's item box and bring them here? Aran's side that is」

「My apologies, that is not possible. In order for Aran-sama's items to enter Edgar-sama's item inventory, there is no other way besides first logging in as Aran-sama, and then sending the items to Edgar-sama through the mail」

「So that's how it works」

「Yes. Due to the system's limitations, this is the only way to do it」

That's really annoying.

The other side's item box has a ton of recovery items so I thought that I could just use those, but looks like I have to log into Aran's side first.

「Edgar-sama, are you perhaps participating in the Grand Mission?」

「Well, that's what I was planning」

「In that case, I suggest that you first finish setting your skills before you worry about items」

「.....Oh yea, that's right」

An essential part of Dragon's Krone, were the 「Skills」 .

Skills were, they were abilities you could acquire by using up the 「Skill Points」 you gained from every level up. There were 「Passive Skills」 that boosted your body's abilities, and also 「Active Skills」 that effected things other than yourself.

The total number of classes you could choose from in Dragon's Krone were 9 classes. Even if two players shared the same class, they could develop their characters in different ways and have completely different specialties.

The thing that made this possible, was Skill Builds.

The player's level cap was set at level 100, and although it was only possible to gain a maximum of 100 Skill Points, the number of skills available to each class easily surpassed 100.

In other words, it was impossible for a player to acquire every single skill of their class, and it was necessary for the player to choose which unique skills they wanted to place their points into.

For example, Edgar's class of 「Samurai」 , only including the active skills there was 「Upper Stance」 , 「Middle Stance」 , 「Lower Stance」 , and 「Iai」 . There were 4 skill trees to choose from.^[1]

Each skill tree had it's own unique specialties and techniques. Being able to customize your skills to fit your own playstyle, this was a fundamental part of one's growth in Dragon's Krone.

「For an experienced player such as Edgar-sama I feel that there is no need for an explanation, but I think that it would be best if Edgar-sama decides on what Skill Build he wishes to use」

「Well, I don't plan on leveling up this character, so I'll just decide it later」

「..... Eh, will that be the case?」

Sonya wrinkled her brow while seeming sad.

As if trying to say 「How unfortunate」 she shrugged her shoulders slightly.

「Since this was a sub-character, I thought that I might finally be able to accompany Edgar-sama...」

「.....Uu」

Edgar was overwhelmed with an unusual sense of guilt.

For a Support NPC, it was possible for them to go out into the Field with you as a Partner. And yet, up until now he had never taken Sonya with him.

This was because Aran was specialized in solo play.

「.....Once everything is finished, I guess it wouldn't be a bad idea to take Sonya hunting with this sub-chara 」

「Will we really?」

「Yeah」

「I'm so glad」

Seeing Sonya with a wholehearted smile on her face, Edgar forgot for a moment that she was not a human. He forgot that she was a program.

Of course you could choose your support NPC's gender, but aside from that you could also choose from a variety of customizations, even choosing if they would be human or animals. Players who customize their NPCs to be females, apparently there are a few players who seriously end up falling in love with them.

Support NPCs were always obedient, always standing by your side, always saving you and helping out in many ways. The players who fall in love with those NPCs, I understand their feelings painfully well.

「Well then-, I'll be logging in to Aran for a bit」

「Understood. Please have a safe trip, Edgar-sama」

Looking over his shoulder and seeing Sonya gracefully bow, Edgar operated the menu and logged out, leaving his Home House behind.

According to the real world clock reflected in the corner of his view, the appointed time until he met with Suzu was steadily approaching.



The meeting place where Edgar was to join up with Suzu's group was right in the center of Crescendo, right in front of the Hunter's Guild.

The Hunter's Guild, it was the place where Dragon Hunters could go and receive various quests. It was also possible to receive the Grand Mission quest there.

It was convenient that they could undertake the Grand Mission right away after they had gathered, but since the Hunter's Guild was the largest building in all of Crescendo, this was overall the best meeting place.

「Heeey~ Edogawa~」

Hearing a voice call out to him, Edgar turned around.

Pushing his way past the other players gathered to participate in the Grand Mission, before him he found an avatar that was the splitting image of the real world Andou with a shaven head, his character name was 「Andou」. Likewise, exactly like the real world Yamabuki, was a long-hair avatar with the character name 「Yamabuki」.

And, looking behind the two, Edgar saw 2 more female avatars.

「I could totally tell it was you right away. Did ya wait long?」

「.....No, not really」

Seeming somewhat non-apologetic, the long haired Yamabuki shrugged his shoulders, and Edgar softly muttered a reply.

Although the meeting time should've been 6pm, it was already 30 minutes past that appointment.

However, Edgar encountered a bit of difficulty trying to transfer recovery items for Aran's item box, so he also ended up being about 10 minutes late.

「Oh~! Really thank ya, Edogawa!」

And, one of the 2 female avatars, a small elf with tanned skin pushed aside Andou and appeared in front of Edgar.

Her skin was exposed in many places, she wore leather short pants, and a short tanktop that exposed her navel.

This super energetic person, she is probably Ninomiya-san's friend Sasaki Megumi, "Megu-san". Setting up her avatar as a small elf with tan skin..... She really knows her stuff. [2]

Guessing from her appearance, her class must be a Thief.

「Ya know, I heard that Andou and Yamabuki totally forgot about our promise. I thought for sure that we couldn't do the Grand Mission and my anger was up to the Max. HOWEVER! You really saved us~」

Putting an emphasis on the 「However!」, Megu sent a glare at Andou and Yamabuki who were behind her.

I see.

So the reason why they were late, is because they were receiving Megu-san's wrath.

「Really though, Thank You, Edogawa-kun..... Well, I guess in this world..... Should we call you Edgar-kun?」

With a glowing smile on her face, standing beside Sasaki Megumi was Suzu.

Her looks were the same as if she took a copy of her real world self. Wrapped in a pure white robe, her figure looked divine.

Her character name was 「Suzu」.

Her Class was Cleric.

Choosing a class that supported her allies with healing, what a befitting class for Ninomiya-san.

「“Edogar”, since your name’s Edogawa, it became Edgar?」

「That’s right」

「Not real creative huh~. That said, our names ain’t that much better」

Saying “We’re not ones to talk”, Andou and Yamabuki both laughed. ^[3]

The flashy one, Yamabuki, was wearing iron plated armor that covered his vulnerable points; his class was Knight. And wielding a giant axe with a baseball player-esque bald-cut was Andou who’s class was a Fighter.

This is again, I feel that these classes very much suited their personalities.

「Hmm~, Edogawa..... I mean, Edgar’s class is a Samurai huh~. You choose a pretty tough class to play huh. Ah, maybe, are you trying to imitate Aran?」

「No, that’s not the case at all」

The happy-looking Megu was in high spirits.

Instead of “imitating”, I’m the real deal though.

「.....Hmm? But, you’re still only LV1? Didn’t you play before, Edgar? Dragon’s Krone that is」

‘Maybe I was mistaken?’ Megu looked over at Suzu.

At those words, Suzu and Andou, and Yamabuki’s gazes all turned and fixed themselves on Edgar. The situation turned into something like that.

「When we talked to you in the classroom it seemed like you played before, but..... If you’ve been playing since before, isn’t it weird to be LV1?」

「Ah, Edgar-kun, is that perhaps..... a sub-character?」

「Eeehh..... aaaa..... ummm」

Being barraged by questions in this virtual world, as if this was in the real world, Edgar stuttered to find words.

Crap.

I didn't consider the most basic parts. If I told them that I made a sub-chara to match their levels then they would probably accept that, but Andou and Yamabuki might pursue it further and say 「We wanna see your main character」 .

I must avoid that at all costs.

In order to protect my livelihood in this world.

「The truth is I used to play before and eventually retired. But my brother has been insisting that we play again lately, so that's why I'm still LV 1」

「Aah, I get it. So Edgar is starting over huh」

「Yeah」

Edgar was quite impressed with himself as he came up with an excuse on the spot.

Doesn't this solve just about everything?

If they believe that I recently restarted playing, then it wouldn't be strange if I had some previous knowledge. There isn't even a need to look purposely unskilled. Even if it's just to accompany them during the Grand Mission, it's great that I don't have to worry about making any missteps.

「Edgar-kun, If your brother invited you..... Does that mean you two are playing together?」

「Well, we haven't been playing together much though」

Suzu asked that with a very curious expression on her face, but Edgar had expected as much.

“Unchain”, being the latest console that was a top-of-the-line technology, it was essentially like an expensive gaming PC; not something that a high-schooler could buy with just pocket change. Although it was not unusual for a household to have an Unchain console, for a family to have a device for each of it’s children, that was extremely rare.

I would like if you didn’t probe any further than that.

「If that’s true, then this is probably the best time for us to be doing the Grand Mission. Nice Timing～」

「Oh, I know Megu. After we clear the Grand Mission, we should all go and help Edgar-kun with leveling up」

「Yea, guess so～. He really helped us out this time after all..... I guess it’s fine if we gave him a helping hand」

As Suzu clapped her hands together with a **Pon**, Megu lightly shrugged her shoulders as if it couldn’t be helped.

But, having them help raise his level, for Edgar who had never experienced something that, he felt a strange emotion overcome him.

I don’t really plan on raising this character, so I don’t really need your help.

But still, why do I not feel bad about them offering to help me.

「..... My thanks」

「You, even in this world you still seem all gloomy huh..... Can’t you be more like 『Thanks guys～!』 and just reply like that?」

Leave my alone.

‘What a poor guy’, to Andou who dropped his shoulders in sympathy, Edgar retorted in his heart.

「Hey~, for now shouldn’t we go and register for the Grand Mission? We don’t know how long it will take to complete it after all」

「Yup, we should. *Uhyaaa*~ I’m super excited!」

With Yamabuki’s words, Megu made a short hop into the air. She seems to be enjoying herself to the fullest.

Looking at them from behind, somewhere in his heart, Edgar felt that it was all a bit anticlimactic.

I was so worried about meeting my real world classmates here in Dragon’s Krone, but looks like I might have been anxious about it for nothing.

They are just like me; They simply like this game. To me, they just look like Players who came here to have fun.

「Let’s go, Edgar-kun」

「Y-yea」

Suzu called out to Edgar.

And as Edgar was still feeling somewhat let-down, he was pulled along by Suzu’s group, and they opened the door to the Hunter’s Guild.

Footnotes:

1. TL note: Upper, Middle, and Lower Stance are originally “Jōdan”, “Chūdan” and “Gendan”. They are kendo terms that refer to the stance you take when you hold out your sword. Essentially they are “over head”, “mid-level”, and “downward” stances. Iai is as I explained before, “the art of drawing out the sword”.

2. TL note: When Ran/Edgar says “she really knows her stuff” he meant it like... a dark Elf really suits his “fancy” (as shown by Sonya also being an Elf).

Also, “Megu” is Sasaki Megumi’s nickname.

3. TL note: To point things out, the two guy’s names are a simple conversion of their Kanji names into Katakana.

Andou: 安藤 → 「アンドウ」

Yamabuki: 山吹 → 「ヤマブキ」

Like he said in the previous chapter, Edgar’s name is in Katakana as 「エドガー」

Megumi/Megu-san uses her nickname of Megu: 「メグ」

Suzu is the only one who keeps her name the exact same, Suzu: すず → 「すず」

CHAPTER 5

OUR FIRST GRAND MISSION (PART 2)

「Well done making it here! You Newborn Dragon Hunters!」

A man with a crew-cut, clad in silver plate armor, was vigorously shouting at Andou.

「For you lot who haven't even gotten past 『Potty Training』 the most ideal quest has come! Let's chase out those Rotten Orcs! How about it! Are you ready to show everyone what you're made of!?!」

「Aah~..... This guy... do we really have to go along with him?」

「yea, probably」

To the plate-mail man who had an annoyingly high amount of tension, Andou and Yamabuki looked to be a bit fed up.

Being a VRMMO game, unlike other games up until now, Dragon's Krone possessed a high level of player immersion. 「Role-playing」, assuming a 'character' and acting out the story, was one of the established ways to enjoy yourself in this game. There were also a large number of players who didn't role-play and simply enjoyed the game as it was suppose to be played.

And Andou and the others belonged to the group that only wanted to enjoy the game as it was.

「.....L-Leave it to us~.....」

「GAHAHA, A Great Answer Andou! The thing I request of you is... Help us drive back the orcs who are attacking from the East at the Mist Witch Lookout. I want you to quickly head on over there and annihilate them!」

It appears that the Grand Mission's story this time goes something like that.

In the world of Dragon's Krone, there are a great number of fiendish Mobs who are not from the Dragon race.

Among them were the Mob that even relatively low level players could handle, the Orc race.

Since Orcs had a low level of intelligence they didn't use magic, but they were a Mob who used single attack 「Two-Handed Weapons」 and had a high attack power. If you get surrounded by a number of them, then orcs became the natural enemy for beginners who would end up panicking.

「A bunch of orcs are coming... that's a bit scary huh~. They have, like, super hideous faces right? Those guys」

「Nn~, they're really scary..... But it will be alright if we fight them as a Party, Megu」

Watching Andou and Yamabuki deal with the procedures from afar, Megu was showing signs of unease as Suzu answered her with a smile.

「Ah, Megu, about the strategy... Yamabuki-kun and Andou-kun will pull in the enemies, and Edgar-kun and Megu will finish them off, something like that sound okay?」

「I guess so~. Will Suzu be on healing duty?」

「Yup, leave it to me」

“That's my job after all,” Suzu continued.

When he heard that conversation, Edgar was thinking about suggesting that the Cleric, Suzu, focus on support magic instead, but he stopped himself just before saying it.

If I was the Party Leader instead, then I should voice my opinion and tell Ninomiya-san and the others how to act, But this time it's different. Also it seems like Ninomiya-san and the others aren't focused on efficiency, so it would be better to stay silent unless we find ourselves in a pinch.

「Edgar-kun, does that plan sound good to you?」

「eh? oh.....sure」

Suddenly being addressed by Suzu, Edgar gave a rushed response.

「Ah, maybe~, is Edgar all scared of the orcs?」

Megu whispered while grinning ear to ear.

The Grand Mission this time will be charging into a group of orcs, in addition, waiting for them behind the masses of orcs will be the Boss Mob 「Orc King」 .

For lower level players, it wouldn't be strange to be somewhat scared by them.

I am completely fine with them though.

「.....Well, orcs have scary faces that probably came straight out of some nightmare after all. Megu-san's feelings, I can't say that I don't see where you're coming from」

「If things get bad come save me kay~, Edgar」

「eh?」

So far, Edgar had never experienced someone relying on him for something, so he just stared back in bewilderment.

「It's not 『eh?』 !! You and I are the main attackers right! If you just abandon me and run away by yourself then things will get scary afterwards you know!」

「.....ツ!」

Glancing at him with a scowl, Megu was obviously showing her blood lust.

If we end up in a pinch, first things first, I **have** to save Megu-san at all costs. In order to preserve my tranquil high-school life, right now and in the future.

「No, I don't plan on doing that but..... If Megu-san gets angry, then I feel sorry for the orcs instead. I definitely won't abandon you」

「Y-You just casually said something so rude! Edgar, were you always that type of character!?!」

「a ha ha, Edgar-kun is so interesting」

As Suzu's light laughter mixed in together with Megu's retort, the surroundings seemed to spread out.

Covering her mouth with both hands, seeing the corners of Suzu's eyes narrow like that, Edgar suddenly found himself swallowing his breath.

What a charming smile. Just getting to see that smile makes me think that it was a good idea to accept their invitation.

「Heeey~, We finished with our registration」

「OOH! LET'S GO!」

As Andou's voice reached them, Megu let out a cry filled with fighting spirit.

At last, together with his classmates, it was finally time to challenge the Grand Mission——

At the edge of their view floated the words 「Confirming Participation In The Grand Mission」 .

And then, after a short while, Edgar and the others were forcibly sent into the Field where the Grand Mission would take place, The 「Mist Witch Lookout」 .



The Mist Witch Lookout, set a little to the East of Crescendo, it was the abandoned ruins of a fort.

According to its background story, in the days of old the Crescendo region was constantly under attack by Orcs. During those times, humans apparently built the Mist Witch Fortress using their own bare hands.

After a long hard fought battle, the war against the Orcs ended in the Human's victory and they ruled over Crescendo. The Mist Witch Fortress has since then been used as an observatory to watch out for the Orc's movements, a 「Lookout」 .

「LISTEN UP! THE MIST WITCH LOOKOUT HAS ALREADY FALLEN TO THE ORCS! OUR GOAL IS TO STORM THE LOOKOUT FROM ALL DIRECTIONS! WE'RE TAKING BACK THIS LOOKOUT!」

Gathered along the rampart walls of the Mist Witch Lookout, there were a number of NPCs clad in silver armor, and a man yelling at the top of his lungs who seemed like he was the leader of this Lookout Recapture Squad.

Since he was wearing the same kind of armor as that silver guy at the Hunter's Guild, I suppose he must be under the direct command of the ruler of this Mist Witch domain.

「W-What intense heat」

「T-This is..... amazing」

Raising their voices in astonishment, were Megu and Yamabuki.

Among the NPCs stood Edgar's party.

Off in the distance, the sound of metal clashing could be heard.

The earthly tremors of explosive magic.

The roaring cries of Orcs.

From beyond the rampart walls, screams could be heard.

Here in this pseudo-constructed world, an unbelievable amount of tension and exhilaration dominated the atmosphere.

「UOOOH, I'M GETTING PUMPED!」

「Yamabuki-kun, Andou-kun, the strategy, make sure not to forget it」

「I won't forget. Me and Yamabuki will gather the targets, then Megu and Edgar will finish them off, right」

Suzu tried to get their attention, but being swallowed by the excitement Yamabuki and Andou answered somewhat absentmindedly.

Seeing them act like that, Edgar was feeling a sense of nostalgia.

When I first started out I was just like them, this kind of atmosphere always got me excited. That is the true pleasure of VR games; it's something that you couldn't taste if you played some other sort of game.

But, if you become too excited then it might prove fatal.

If you are overexcited then you won't be able to make calm decisions, in a dangerous situation those feelings of excitement can turn into 「Poison」 .

「.....Suzu-san, do you have a moment?」

「Eh?」

Even though it was her character name, being apprehensive about calling her just 「Suzu」, Edgar called out to one of his party members, to Suzu who didn't seem like she was being swept away by the mood. He wanted to confirm the situation.

「Andou and Yamabuki, is this their first Grand Mission?」

「Yea, and I think it's the same for Megu. I have some experience though」

「I see. In that case, there's the possibility that those two will dive in headfirst while forgetting the strategy. Healing magic raises Aggro, so if the orcs start targeting you then just call out to me」

“Aggro^[1]” was something that applied to Mobs, it was 「Hatred towards the Player」

.

Once a player gathers a certain level of Aggro, Mobs will then target that player and start attacking them. But, there was a certain technique to control this Aggro known as 「Aggro Management」. This Aggro Management was an extremely important component of Party Combat.

Since the main thing that generates the most Aggro was 「The Severity of Damage Dealt」, if you had a large number of Attackers, and if players other than yourself continue to attack in a similar fashion, then the Mobs would target everyone separately and you might not be able to heal them in time.

In order to counteract that, classes like Knights and Fighters were assigned 「Tank Duty」. Since they were classes that possessed 「Aggro Generating Skills」, they can make themselves the target of enemy attacks. As such, it was important to have at least one person in your party who could be on tank duty, or at least that was the theory behind it.

However, “making the enemies target you”, this was a rather difficult technique for beginner players.

This was because 「Healing a low HP Player’s Health」 also generated a large amount of Aggro.

In other words, if the Tank is negligent in his duty of Aggro-Control, then every time he gets healed there is the possibility that the Mob might rush into the rear guard and attack the Cleric. For beginner parties, this was a common incident that occurred and often lead to a complete party wipe-out.

「.....Understood. Or rather, Edgar-kun is really calm huh」

「Eh? That so?」

「Yea. It’s like, “as expected of a restarting player”」

Those words made Edgar’s heart jump.

Crap. Even though I told myself that I wouldn’t offer any advice, I ended up saying something by accident. If I’m not careful and stand out too much then they might start questioning things later.

「Well then, Strengthening Magic, I’m going to cast some, okay」

「o-okay」

Suzu took up her staff, and she activated 【Scutum I^[2]】 which enhanced the defensive power of all party members.

A number of light orbs swirled around each party member, and their bodies started to lightly shine.

「Thanks」

「Let's do our best, Edgar-kun」

From underneath her hood, a smile could be seen on Suzu's face.

And so, the Leader-esque NPC of the Recapture Squad brandishing his sword in the air. As if inspired by him, the surrounding NPCs all held up their swords and shields.

A dreadful, feverish enthusiasm.

The excitement in the air continued to escalate, the signal for battle was approaching.

The NPC's immense war cry paralyzed Edgar and other's sense of hearing.

And then, a single ray of light.

The door to the Mist Witch Lookout soundlessly opened.

That was the signal for the Start of the Grand Mission.

Footnotes:

1. TL note: The original word used here is "Hate". Since it's pretty much the same, I converted it into the English equivalent of "Aggro"

2. TL note: As I mentioned in chapter 1, a Scutum is a type of shield used by roman centurions.

CHAPTER 6

TROUBLE A'BREWING AT THE MIST WITCH LOOKOUT (PART 1)

As the rampart doors connecting to the inside of the lookout opened wide, almost as if some foreign substance suddenly was yanked out of their ears, the intense sound of battle assaulted Edgar and the other's eardrums.

This Field where the Grand Mission was taking place, This Mist Witch Lookout, it was a simple Field designed almost like an Arena.

In the center of it all was a watchtower surrounded by a number of buildings. Aside from that there was no other places to take cover.

Also there, was a disgusting number of Orc figures, and clashing swords with them were the NPCs of the Recapture Squad.

「YAMABUKIII! WE'RE AIMING FOR THE HEART OF THAT WATCHTOWER」

「OOOOO!」

As the NPCs behind them formed a surging wave and charged forth, plunging in head first along with the NPCs, were the cornerstones of their party's formation. Of all things, it was the tanks Andou and Yamabuki.

「H-HOLD ON! Andou! Yamabuki!」

「You Three should hurry, Megu-san!」

The two dashed ahead without paying any attention to the rest of their party members. Megu called out trying to stop them, but, just like the figures of those two, her words simply melded together with the loud clamor and disappeared.

「You've got to be kidding me.....」

Watching as Andou and Yamabuki disappeared into the wave of NPCs, Edgar just stood there looking astonished.

Now they've done it.

To think, both of our tanks to rushed on ahead and left us behind at the very start of the quest... This was beyond my expectations.

「What's up with those guys! They're total idiots, right!? I can't believe this!! It's like they didn't under the strategy AT ALL!」

「It doesn't look good huh, this situation.....」

Even the normally calm Suzu was showing signs of panic.

Although this was an 「Event」 related to the Grand Mission Festival, the penalty associated with dying was still in full effect. In other words, if you died then everything in your item inventory will be turned into drops.

Andou and Yamabuki will suffer the consequences for diving in recklessly, but Suzu-san and Megu-san who were left behind, I can't let them die and meet the same fate.

「Megu-san, Suzu-san, let's change up our strategy」

Among the NPCs that were all charging forth like an avalanche, Edgar held back the other two people who were left behind.

「Haa!? Why are you being so laid-back Edgar! We have to hurry up, and chase after those blockheads!」

「As things are now, splitting up and chasing after Andou and Yamabuki isn't a good idea. Even if it's only us three, we have to act in a composed manner」

The worst thing that could happen right now, is getting split apart by the wave of NPCs as they tried to chase after Andou and Yamabuki.

A troubling number of Orcs were causing mayhem as they swung their weapons around. Even if they tried to wait for the quest to end, they would probably be attacked by the orcs and wiped-out first.

「Megu, just calm down for now. Like Edgar-kun said, we have to keep our cool, okay?」

Grabbing onto her hand, Suzu tried to suppress Megu's emotions.

Unlike traditional games that were like watching 「unrealistic」 fights on a TV screen, VRMMO combat let you take in the fear and excitement with all 5 of your senses, a 「Realistic」 experience.

The 「Excitement」 that consumed Andou and Yamabuki, and the 「Anger」 that consumed Megu, These were not things being displayed on some status screen. Without even having to cast “abnormal status recovery” magic, Suzu's touch was able to return Megu to a state of 「composure」 .

「Well then, Edgar-kun, you said we were changing our strategy?」

While pacifying Megu who was letting the words “I'll make them pay after this” leak out of her mouth, Suzu asked a question.

「For now let's give up on trying to attack the Boss 『Orc King』 who's waiting at the center of the watchtower. Our highest priority, should be meeting up with Andou and Yamabuki first」

「In that case we have to hurry up and——」

「That would be dangerous, Megu-san. If you give in to your anger and dive in after them, then you could get surrounded by orcs and that will be the end of the line for you. As we chase after them, it is important that we confirm the safety of our surroundings. However, Megu-san is not wrong, it's true that we can't just sit here and waste time twiddling our thumbs」

Saying that, Edgar took out an item from his item inventory.

「.....What's this?」

「Just a Healing Herb」

This was something he had prepared in advance, Edgar had filled 2/3rds of his item inventory with recovery herbs.

「Healing Herb? Did you prepare this beforehand? Even though we have Suzu?」

「As long as we have lost our tanks, it is dangerous to be casting healing magic. In you happen to take any damage, then use these to heal yourself, Megu-san. As for Suzu-san, until we meet up with Andou and Yamabuki, I would like for you to focus on weakening and debuff magic」

「.....Yeah, understood」

「Also, until we meet up with them it would be best if we avoided combat. We will do our best to focus on running away. We'll fall behind the other parties in rankings, but that can't be helped」

It would be best if we gave up on the Grand Mission reward huh.

Even so, to think that our goal changed from completing the Grand Mission to ‘making it to the end without dying’...

Aaah, Parties are really annoying.

「Speaking of which, ya know Edgar..... He’s surprisingly a really reliable guy huh」

「Yeah, it might be a bit rude to say, but I’m honestly surprised」

Looking amazed, Megu whispered to Suzu.

Although it was supposed to be a compliment, he somewhat felt that they were making fun of him at the same time. Edgar was at a loss at what expression he should make, so he scratched his nose embarrassingly.

「.....W-Well then, let’s go」

Handing half of the Healing Herbs to Megu, Edgar readied his beginner samurai weapon 「Uchigatana^[1]」 and pulled it out.

「Roger!」

「Okay!」

At the same time, Megu wielded two small daggers in both hands, and Suzu took up her staff.

Although they are now completely behind, from here on it will be “Quest Start”——

The start to Edgar’s Grand Mission troubles was only beginning.



Edgar was apprehensive about trying to survive until the end of the quest, but during the Grand Mission that is an event tailored to low-level players, he was their greatest ally.

The orcs gathered around the 4 entrances at the start, he dealt with them all by himself without any assistance from his party.

「Ushhh!」

Megu swiftly maneuvered the daggers in her hands, and silenced the orcs with a sure-fire strike.

This would make it her 4th one. Suzu-san was not using her healing magic, and was focusing on weakening the enemies.

Looks like it will be smooth sailing up for now.

Based on my assumption, the orcs that we will have to work together as a party to defeat, they probably won't show up until we get closer to the watchtower where Boss Mob is.

「Suzu-san, it is about time you should stopped using debuff magic. If the time comes, we might need you to preserve some stamina」

That “If” that Edgar was speaking of, was the 「If」 if they managed to meet up with Andou and Yamabuki who went on ahead.

Those two are carrying absolutely no Healing Herbs... I doubt that to be the case, but we have to move under the assumption that we could find them in a situation where they have almost no health left. If something like that were to happen, then before we even bother with Aggro Management, we have to prioritize healing them first.

If the tanks end up dying, then the possibility that Suzu-san and Megu-san will survive until to the end of the Grand Mission will be pretty much close to Zero.

「The next one is coming! Edgaarr!」

Without waiting for Suzu's reply, in front of him was an Orc readying his humongous axe.

His target is me huh.

Edgar immediately pointed his blade at the Orc.

Grasping onto the hilt, He took a step forward.

The distance from the Orc was a few meters. The number of steps between them was about 4 steps. That distance was the same length of the orc's axe.

Edgar kicked off the ground with his left foot

Maybe because his Status was low, his movements were a bit dull but it wasn't a problem.

As if he was gliding across the floor, Edgar closed the distance in an instant and appeared before the Orc's chest.

The First Skill in the 【Lower Stance】 Tree, the Samurai Skill: 【Ground Rush】 .

「Edgar-kun!」

「I got this」

From the rear, Suzu's voice could be heard.

And, at the same time there was the sound of the Orc swinging down his axe.

Swiftly dodging to the right, shifting to the side with perfect timing, Edgar held his katana with an overhead stance, and let loose the blade.

The moment the giant axe and the katana clashed, the screeching sound of metal rang out.

With a thud, the ground shook.

Stuck in the ground was the giant axe. He took no damage. And again he quickly let loose his katana.

Now defenseless, he slipped past the Orc's side and aiming for its back, he sliced through.

With a flashy effect, blood spewed forth.

「Megu-san! The finishing blow!」

「.....O-Okay!」

Megu had stopped for a moment as she was dumbfounded by Edgar's movements, but she again stirred her hands.

Thiefs had low HP and lacked brute force, but their attacks were accurate and they were hard to catch. With skills that enhanced movement, Thiefs were a class with high agility stats.

Compared to the other classes, a Thief's accuracy was much higher, so their duty was often to finish off Mobs.

「Yaaa!!」

Megu, similar to Edgar's 【Ground Rush】 , she activated her own high-speed movement skill 【Wind Walker】 . She bridged the distance between her and the Orc within a second.

Crossing beside Edgar, she landed firmly on the hilt of the giant axe that was wedged in the floor.

The Orc didn't have a chance to react.

She leapt straight up into the air—

Twirling her body around, she flew towards the Orc's backside.

At the same time a glittering effect shot out of her two daggers.

A Skill that unleashed 2 swift attacks: 【2-Fold Blink Strike】 .

Since she was equip with a dagger in each hand, the Orc was struck by a total of 4 slashes.

「Uwaaa.....!」

The Orc's giant body began to sway, and it fell down to its knees.

Megu, who had landed behind the Orc, was in danger of being squashed, so in a panic she rushed over to Edgar's side.

「Fii~! Good Job Edgar!..... Wait, rather than a “Good Job” aren't you like super amazing? How come you can move around like that?」

「No, well, it just happened to work out by accident」

Trying not to raise any suspicions, Edgar acted humble about it.

Even if they believe that I started over again, it's still not good to stand out too much.

In order to not seem too conspicuous, it might be best if I purposely take some damage..... But taking damage from the orcs might end up a bit painful.

Wonder what I should do.

「.....Megu! Edgar-kun!」

Then, the alarmed voice of Suzu reached both of their ears.

「Over there! Andou and Yamabuki!」

「Eh!? Seriously!? Where!?!」

With some anger mixed in with her tone, Megu began searching around for the two.

No, rather than “anger”, it’s closer to “murderous intent”.

This is... I can’t afford to let Megu-san have her way with them huh. After we’ve gone through so much to desperately try and save them for the orcs, I can’t have her killing off Andou and Yamabuki like that.

「Over there! Where the Orcs are!」

「.....Found them」

Faster than Megu could, Edgar spotted them first.

As for the location, they were about half way to one of the entrances to the watchtower.

Surrounded by a party of orcs, Edgar could see the figures of two players with long hair and a shaved head.

「Suzu-san, Prepare to use healing magic」

「Okay!」

Immediately giving instructions to Suzu, Edgar began running towards them.

「Megu-san, Prioritize attacking the same target as me」

「Eeeh, by that, you mean, which one!? Wai- Hold up, Wait a second!」

「Megu, Hurry!」

Having not yet spotted Andou and Yamabuki, Megu chased after Edgar and Suzu who left before her. She sprinted after them.

Probably, when we cast healing magic on Andou and Yamabuki, the orcs will most likely change their target to Suzu-san. But that doesn't matter.

I will dispose of all the orcs who try to chase after Suzu-san.

Keeping an eye out for the orcs in their surroundings, Edgar, Suzu, and Megu avoided their attacks as they pressed on forward, trying to reach Andou and Yamabuki who were being cornered by a party of orcs.

—However, awaiting them there was a situation that they would have never expected.

Footnotes:

1. TL note: Uchigatana are shorter than the originally traditional Tachi sword. It is also worn blade side up with allowed for the creation of techniques such as battoujutsu and iaijutsu. See reference picture here (I will probably be referencing this picture again)

CHAPTER 7

TROUBLE A'BREWING AT THE MIST WITCH LOOKOUT (PART 2)

Gathered together in the Grand Mission Field, 4 Parties tried to defeat as many Mobs as they could, tried to deal as much damage as they could to the Boss Mob, and tried to clear the quest as fast as possible. They competed with each other in these aspects of 「Points」 and 「Time」 .

Participating Players always had to keep track of their party member's HP while looking out for Mobs, and they also had to worry about the Boss Mob at the end. However, there was one more thing a player must not forget about.

That was, “interference” from other participating players.

In the world of Dragon's Krone, as long as you were in the Field or a Dungeon, if you were in any place where Mobs could spawn, then it was always a possibility that you might enter into combat with other players. As long as you were in these areas, 「PvP (Player versus player)」 was always a viable concern.

As you struggled to fight against a Mob, you had to consider the possibility that another player might come from behind and strike you down. That constant tension was one of the many thrills of Dragon's Krone. This was one of the reasons why a very small number of people became Solo Players, just like Aran was.

And of course, the Field for the Grand Mission was no exception.

However, players would normally never start PvPing during a Grand Mission.

The reason was simple, if you started PvPing then you would become preoccupied with your opponent and the other parties would get ahead and hunt down all the Mobs instead. As a result, PvPing was mutually detrimental to both the attacking and defending party.

Although it was called interference, neighboring parties still had enough spare time to fire off a few spells like the Lighting Magic Spell 【Voltage】 . This didn't result in any major time loss, but this level of interference was merely a small annoyance. During the Grand Mission was it was common knowledge that PvP had nothing but demerits to it— And yet, before Edgar was a sight completely beyond his expectations.

「E-EDGAR!」

「S-SAVE USS!」

Andou and Yamabuki's cries for help reached Edgar's ears.

Just like he had expected, both of them had lost almost all of their health. They were on the verge of death.

However, the opponents they were facing was something that Edgar was not prepared for.

The thing they were fighting against was not the fearsome orcs— It was 2 other players.

「.....Would you be their comrades?」

「Haa, you've come really late huh」

Holding down Yamabuki was a dark-skinned player with a black martial arts outfit, and pointing his huge sword at Andou was a second one-eyed Player with a smirk on his face.

The man wearing the martial arts outfit was part of the attacker class 「Monk」 , and the man who was blind in one eye was the same class as Andou, a Fighter— Without a healer on their team, they were classes highly specialized in offense. I didn't see the other 3 people in their party anywhere, but they probably got split apart like we did.

Even so, why is it that Andou and Yamabuki aren't fighting against orcs, and instead were fighting against players?

I had accepted the idea that we might find them fighting against orcs, but this situation is—

「Egdar! You're way too fast! Didn't I say you can't abandon me.... Wait, what the hell is this!？」

「.....ツ! Andou-kun!? Yamabuki-kun!？」

「Oops, stop right there, just sit tight and don't move a muscle」

With a grin surfacing on the one-eyed Fighter face as he gave them a warning while pointing his sword at Andou, as if the two of them had taken hostages.

「W-What on earth are you guys doing!」

「Can't you tell just by looking? I'm pretty much pointing my sword right at your comrades, you know?」

Sneering at them, the Fighter spat back at Megu.

Hearing those words, Edgar slowly started to piece together the situation.

Now that I've had a good look around, It seems like the surrounding orcs have all been defeated.

In other words, these guy's objective is not the orcs, but they're aiming for Andou and Yamabuki. And, they're also going after us, their party members trying to save them.

So this means—

「You guys.....Are you Player Killers?」

The sound of Suzu's voice filled the area.

PK (Player Killer), this term summed up players who were intent on attacking others.

In PvP, both parties consent to the same terms before engaging in combat. However, unlike PvP, PKers don't ask for consent..... many of them simply fight because they are driven by evil intent.

「Who knows~? I wonder~」

「.....Even though there shouldn't be any merit to PvP and PK during the Grand Mission, the reason why you are doing this... I can only think of one reason though」

「Heeh~, you're not just a pretty face huh, you seem to know your stuff. I have *absolutely* no idea what you could be referring to though」

The dark-skinned monk wore a disgusting smile on his face.

But, although a grimace appeared on her face for a moment, Suzu continued on without any hesitation.

「『Collusion』 is prohibited by the rules you know」

「Hahaha!」

At Suzu's words the two players raised their voices and laughed.

Collusion, a type of unfair foul-play that could be called abusive conduct. Simply put, it was like a form of match-fixing.

In Dragon's Krone, Collusion during the Grand Mission has been a long time problem.

The 4 Parties that are chosen to participate in the Grand Mission are selected at random by using a special lottery system.

The reason they used this system, was to deal with Collusion in Dragon's Krone.

The details are as such.

Before the start of the Mission two parties becomes friends with each other, and if they happen to enter the same specialized Field, then one of the parties would start PKing every other party besides they allied party. And then, as one of the parties go around PKing, the other party will head to the Boss Mob and take it down.

Since acts of malicious collusion ruined the purpose of participating in the Grand Mission, it was prohibited by the rules of conduct. If the admins were to find out that you were colluding, then you would receive severe punishments and might even have your account permanently frozen.

「Saying that we're Colluding..... Are you trying to pick a fight with us? You got any proof of that?」

「The fact that you are PKing during the Grand Mission where there is no benefit in doing so is proof enough. Please step away from those two. And I will be reporting your actions to the administrators」

Suzu stood firm and didn't back down. But the mood of the two players turned sour.

「.....Oi, even though your just a beginner with no combat experience, are you trying to act all cocky?」

「.....ツ」

The Monk sent an intimidating glare towards them; Suzu and Megu subconsciously froze up.

In terms of level the Monk and the Fighter were around Suzu and Megu's level, but they clearly carried the airs of being skilled players.

Most likely, they made these characters so that they could be thrown away even if their accounts got exposed for collusion, Edgar came to such a conclusion. For these

two, they probably only see players participating in the Grand Mission as 「Nothing but weaklings」 .

The way they look down on us, it could be plainly felt in their attitude.

「Damn, this really fucking sucks. You guys are just so rude, accusing us of something like that... Seems like we need to give you guys some strict 『Training』 」

「Yea, Agreed」

The two players slowly got on their feet, and bore their fangs.

Assaulted by their intimidation, Suzu and Megu reflexively took a step back.

Perhaps they have confidence in their 「Knowledge」 and 「Technique」 . With those PvP weapons that weren't reflected in one's Status, they that arrogant smiles on their face as if their victory was guaranteed.

However, they are not the only ones confident in their PvP abilities.

「In that case, shall we do it?」

「..... Ah?」

Casually walking up to confront the two— was Edgar.

「E-Edgar-kun!?!」

「Hey, Wait, Edgar! This is bad you know!」

Suzu and Megu's expressions grew pale.

Unlike fighting against Mobs, PvP was not that simple.

As long as you repeatedly fought against Mobs who only act according to their programming, eventually you would be able to completely understand their movements. But this was not the same when fighting against other players who could read your movements and then adapt their strategy to counteract you. And even more so for experienced players, they could make split second decisions and change their actions accordingly. In a very short time they could grasp their opponent's movements and then 「Predict^[1]」 their thought process.

These Two could easily tell that they were more experienced than us, and Suzu and the others could probably also feel that sensation on their skin.

「.....Pfft, You? Fight against us? What, with a level like yours?」

「You best give up. I get that you're trying to act cool in front of a bunch of girls, But shouldn't you read the mood a little better? Newbie 」

“What a complete joke,” the two people burst out laughing.

Although his level went up after fighting against the orcs, Edgar was still only level 3. He wasn't even half the level of either the Monk or the Fighter.

However, Edgar still had a lax expression.

「What? Was all that talk for nothing? You scared of me or something?」

「.....Wha!?!」

Unthinkable for the real world him, Edgar shot threatening words at the two.

Perhaps they were surprised by those words, Suzu and Megu stood completely baffled. And not just them, but the delinquent Monk and Fighter were also dumbfounded.

「..... Now ain't this getting interesting. Don't go crying to mommy, damn newbie」

The man who was a Monk made such a terrifyingly angry face that you won't think it belonged to a human.

「Edgar, let me also.....」

「I'll be fine. Megu-san, and Suzu-san, you should preserve your HP and Stamina for when we head over to fight the Boss Mob」

Edgar replied to Megu and Suzu who were looking uneasy.

And so, taking up his starting samurai weapon, the uchigatana, Edgar readied his stance.



From the looks of it, their equipment is pretty high quality compared to their level. And addition, their levels are barely within the upper restriction for participating in the Grand Mission.

They were higher in terms of equipment, Status, and combat forces.

Moreover, the situation is 1 vs 2.

If you think about it normally, I'm the one with a disadvantage.

「Hey, you bastard」

With a broad grin on his face the one-eyed Fighter called out to him.

「Shouldn't you consult the wiki and fix your skills before coming here? What the hell do you plan on doing with that totally fucked up Skill Build?」

「Kuku-, Now don't be like that. Can't you see he's just some newbie he doesn't even know who he should be afraid of? They say ignorance is a strength too ya know」

「Oh, I see」

The sound of their vulgar laughter rang out.

Just as those two said, the skills Edgar obtained upon reaching level 3, they were far off from the theoretically ideal skill build.

One of the Samurai's active skills; the First Skill in the 【Lower Stance】 Tree, 【Ground Rush】 .

The Counter Skill in the 【Middle Stance】 Tree, 【Tsubame-Gaeshi^[2]】 .

And the First Skill in the 【Upper Stance】 Tree, the Attack Skill 【Diagonal-Slice】 —

Without any uniformity in the Skill Trees, whichever way you look at it, Edgar's skills made it seem like he just threw Skill Points around randomly.

「Edgar-kun」

Suddenly Edgar heard Suzu's voice close to his ear.

「.....What is it?」

「Those people, they're probably sub-characters. I think they have a high level of game knowledge. They are really..... dangerous」

Suzu softly whispered those words into his ear, and Edgar turned and looked at her as if saying that he understood that.

Of course, Edgar had also suspected something like that.

「I'll be fine. There's no way in hell I'll lose to some colluding scumbags」

「..... ツ!」

With a glare in his eyes, Edgar scowled at the Monk.

Aside from pointing their swords at Suzu and Megu, Edgar was genuinely furious with the two of them because they were Colluding.

Edgar was, he was one of the people who wholeheartedly despised players who used unfair methods such as Collusion.

Here in my beloved Dragon's Krone, things like Collusion might harm the game's longevity, and this is an absolutely unforgivable offense to me. I don't know what will happen to those other Colluding players, but at the very least I will be sure to thoroughly punish these two.

「Hey, what's wrong, newbie. Bring it on already」

「..... You don't have to tell **me** that」

Glancing to his side at the worried Suzu, with a bang, Edgar kicked off the ground.

The distance was about 3 steps. Without even having to use 【Ground Rush】 , he instantly zeroed in on the Monk.

Seeing Edgar immediately bridge the distance between them, the Monk swiftly readied his guard.

That stance is from the Monk Class's Skill Tree 【Earth Form】 huh.

Rather than relying on multiple punches, this skill tree utilized broad footwork to deal massive damage in one hit. I should be on the lookout for skills that ignore defense—

「ORAAA!!」

Aiming for a counter, the Monk made his move.

A brilliant effect shot out, resembling the motion of a frontal kick, the trajectory changed, and with the side of his foot he let loose a 「Leg Blade」 .

This was the skill that Edgar had been cautious of, The 【Crush Kick】 .

As if he was swinging a blade, the kick sliced through the air and assaulted Edgar with an explosive sound.

However, the 【Crush Kick】 meant as a counter simply cut through thin air.

In that instant Edgar had warped his body; He shifted his body's axis to the side.

「.....ッ!？」

Perhaps he didn't expect Edgar to dodge just in the nick of time, the Monk simply looked on with wide open eyes, and in his mind Edgar was chuckling to himself.

Mob combat and PvP combat, he couldn't even count the number of times he has experienced these before. For someone like Edgar, that single attack was enough for him to accurately assess his opponent.

If this guy was a high level player, then there's no way he would start off by using 【Crush Kick】 in PvP combat.

The start-up time is too slow, the motion is easily read, and you would most likely eat a Counter after using it.

If he was a highly experienced Monk, then he would use a multitude of swift and small attacks while mixing in a couple of skills. Simply firing off a skill like that, he isn't thinking and is just playing it by the book.

This guy, I thought he might be somewhat skilled since he was so full of himself, but I guess he's only on an intermediate level huh.

「Haha, nice job dodging that!」

“But, you avoiding it was just a fluke,” he made sure to add that last part on the end. Next, the Monk began attacking with a flurry of light attacks.

Low Kick, In-Low Kick, Right Jab, Middle Thrust—

Unlike the 【Crush Kick】 he used earlier, one after another, he kept aiming those short attacks at Edgar.

「HAHAHA! *ORA ORA ORAAaa!!* What’s the matter Newbiee!」

「EDGAR-KUUN!」

The Monk yelled out triumphantly, and from behind Suzu’s scream could be heard.

However, Edgar didn’t seem the last bit concerned.

Swift attacks like these, only a few of them could be dodged. However, as a consequence of using multiple skills to connect each attack, it was impossible to deal much damage with them.

Aaah, this is seriously a pain in the ass.

His choice of attacks is in the completely wrong order.

Even if you use tiny attacks after using a big one, they won’t help you much you know.

「Even if you knelt down and begged, it’s too late for you now」

「Like hell I would」

Maybe he was feeling good because Edgar was only defending, but the Monk once again activated his bold skill, 【Crush Kick】 .

Covered by a shining effect, he started the kicking motion.

However, Edgar was waiting for that moment.

「*ORA*, DIEEE.....ッ!？」

All of a sudden, Edgar's body was shrouded in pale light.

With a flash, a high pitch noise shook the air, a ring of light danced around him.

A cloud of dust rose up into the air.

Edgar's figure had disappeared.

「*Naa*.....!？」

The Monk was at a loss for words.

The scene before him, was as if 「The Moon itself had appeared」 [3]

Footnotes:

1. TL note: The word “Predict” is actually a Japanese/English fighting game term known as “Yomi”. Yomi refers to “know the mind of your opponent” and allowed you to predict or “read” their next move.
2. TL note: Tsubame-Gaeshi is a pretty well-known counter technique. Translated as “Swallow Reversal”, it is a commonly used sword (and judo) technique that often appears in popular media, Like Fate/Stay Night or Final Fantasy or even Prince of Tennis.
3. TL note: This line literally says “The Moon was Walking” but since I’m taking liberties anyways so I converted it into something that makes more English sense. Think of “the moon walking” like it was “going across the sky (or ground in this case)”. See the end note in the next chapter for more context.

CHAPTER 8

MOON STEP

Action Games and Fighting Games, once players figure out techniques that the developers didn't intend to be a part of the game mechanics, many of those techniques become the accepted standard.

This happened particularly often for the Fighting Game genre. For example, in a certain classic 2D fighting game, there was a simple bug that allowed you to cancel a normal move into your special move. In spite of it being a bug, this allowed for a deeper level of strategy on the competitive level, and it became widespread to the point where it was considered a fundamental technique. That technique which came from a bug would eventually become officially recognized and implemented in the next game in the series.

And of course, techniques like these also existed in the highly action-packed game of Dragon's Krone.

That technique was Aran's 「Moon Step」 .

Moon Step was not a skill implemented into Dragon's Krone's game mechanics.

Moon Step was a god-like technique that only Aran could use; his fans had even christened the technique with names like 「AraSte (Aran Step)」 and 「Aran Style」 .

「Wh.....What.....」

The Monk had absolutely no idea what had happened to his own body.

He had tossed out his 【Crush Kick】 at Edgar who was in front of him, but Edgar's body was obscured by pale light, and suddenly the Monk received a fierce attack from behind—

The Monk couldn't comprehend what had happened, and simply knew that he was struck as a result.

「.....Whaa, Wh-Wha-Wha.....」

However, the view was different for the players watching on the side lines.

After suddenly witnessing what just happened, every player, including the one-eyed Fighter, they had all forgotten how to form words, and simply stood there awestruck.

Blowing up a cloud of dust, with his body clad in pale light, Edgar had instantaneously moved behind the Monk within a blink of an eye—

That was, without a doubt, Aran's 「Moon Step」 .

「E-Edgar-kun.....Just now.....what did you.....」

「WH, WHAAAAT, THE MOOON STEEEPPPP!? HOW COME EDGAR CAN USE IT!? THIS ISN'T REAL, RIGHT!?!」

Suzu and Megu voiced their amazement at the same time.

Aran's Moon Step, it was such a mystery that players created a exclusive page on the Dragon's Krone Wiki to try and recreate it, it was a technique that everyone wanted to learn.

Since Aran himself has never made the technique public, it was never properly explained how he was able to use the Moon Step.

However, although it was only on the level of speculation, volunteers tirelessly analyzed Aran's livestream footage in an attempt to explain the true nature of the Moon Step.

According to the volunteers, Moon Step was apparently the byproduct of several skills used in succession.

From the high-speed movement skill 【Ground Rush】 , you would circle around the opponent and appear behind them by using the Counter skill 【Tsubame-Gaeshi】

, and then you would use the Skill **【All or Nothing】** which converts defense into offensive power to finish them off.

The reason why his body glows a pale blue light, is because of a lingering visual effect from using **【Tsubame-Gaeshi】** . This was pretty much the general consensus as to how the Moon Step was produced.

However, there was a problem with that explanation.

No matter how you think about it, it was impossible to string together **【Ground Rush】** **【Tsubame-Gaeshi】** and **【All or Nothing】** in rapid succession.

The primary theory used in Dragon's Krone is that you should focus on leveling up only one Skill Tree. This allowed you to learn the most powerful skills in that Tree, but there was another reason why it was important to only use one Tree.

That was 「Combinations」 .

If you learned skills from the same Skill Tree, then you can form a one-time 「Combination」 between those skills. Once you use the first skill it was possible to cancel the movement and activate the second skill in succession.

For instance, if you learned **【Ground Rush】** from the Samurai Skill Tree **【Lower Stance】** , then was possible to connect it together with the skill **【Upward Slice】** that was from the same Tree.

Therefore, under normal conventions, Aran's Moon Step was a technique that should be impossible to accomplish.

From the **【Lower Stance】** Tree you used **【Ground Rush】** and the connected it together with the **【Tsubame-Gaeshi】** from the **【Middle Stance】** Tree, and lastly you would connect it with **【All or Nothing】** from the **【Iai】** Tree.

Of the many players who challenged the Moon Step and there were a few that claimed on the wiki 「It's doable」 . However, other than Aran's broadcast videos, there was no proof that such a feat was possible, and Moon Step remain a mysterious technique till this day.

「Bastard.....You can use the Moon step.....!？」

「Like you said earlier, the last move was 【Diagonal Slash】 from that 『Fucked up Skill Build』 though.....But, It's still good enough right?」

Edgar nimbly turned his body, and pointed the tip of his katana at the one-eyed Fighter. The moment he did so, the Monk who took the brunt of Edgar's 【Diagonal Slash】 fell down and crumbled on the spot

「Uu, uuuu.....㇏」

The Fighter instinctively took a step back.

Witnessing Edgar use the Moon Step, that alone was enough to greatly extinguish his will to fight.

「What's the matter? Weren't you going to “educate” us? Bring it on already」

「.....Y-YOU BASTARRD.....!」

Like hell I can let this newbie make a fool out of me——

Falling for Edgar's provocation, the Fighter let his anger ooze out as he shouldered his giant sword.

However, Edgar's provoking words were merely 「Bait」 .

「I'LL FUUCKING KILL YOUUU!!」

Giving in to his anger, the Fighter charged at Edgar.

He held his blade by his side.

Using the momentum from pivoting with his right leg, he flailed the giant sword around in a large circle.

The Fighter used his area of effect Skill 【Slash】 .

Being careful of the Moon Step, he used his 【Slash】 Attack over a large area. He was thinking of restricting Edgar's movement's with that attack.

However——

「Naive」

Once again Edgar's body glowed pale blue.

Edgar started to move at extreme speeds.

But, this time he did not circle around behind his opponent.

Where Edgar was headed, was right into the greatsword's path.

And, the moment his body was struck by the Fighter's greatsword, Edgar activated the Samurai Counter Skill 【Tsubame-Gaeshi】 .

「Aa.....Gaa!」

Signaling the activation of the skill a glittering effect came forth. Floating above the Fighter was a damage counter higher than the amount the Monk took.

Being supplemented by the additional damage gained from using a counter, the Fighter's health was depleted in an instant.

This is what made Moon Step truly terrifying.

If you matched the initial 【Ground Rush】 to sync up with your opponents attack then you could activate 【Tsubame-Gaeshi】 on them. If you focused everything on the timing, then you could unleash a powerful attack into your opponent's backside.

Moon Step was a technique with no openings; It was a technique to be feared in terms of both offense and defense.

「You..... shitty bastard.....」

「From my point of view, **You** guys are the shitty bastards for Colluding」

Edgar swiftly sealed his katana back in it's saya.

As the Fighter fell down to his knees, his body turned into small orbs of light, and he disappeared.

「A-Amazing.....」

As if breathing a sigh of relief those words came out of Suzu and Megu.

Level, Equipment, and Numbers. The odds were entirely stacked against him, and yet Edgar was victorious. Watching Edgar's battle, it was like seeing a sword fight being acted out on television, the beautiful sight was etched into their memories.

「You guys alright, Andou, Yamabuki」

「ah, yea, somehow.....but」

Forgetting that they needed to recover their health, Andou managed to squeeze out a reply to Edgar who had turned to look at them.

「You seriously beat the two of them」

「Wait, you..... how come you can use the Moon Step?」

「.....Well, that is.....」

—*Now then, how should I explain this.*

As was expected, Andou and Yamabuki asked him that question. Edgar was carefully deliberating.

I let my anger get the best of me and I ended up using the Moon Step, so I expected them to ask me about it, but... I wonder what kind of explanation would satisfy them.

“Aran taught me the Moon Step.”

“The Moon Step was a technique that Aran and I developed together.”

No, here I should just say 「Aran was one of my friends before I retired」, that might be the best thing to say right now.

「The truth is-」

「AANDOOOUUUU!!! YAMABUKIIIIII!!!」

Just as Edgar was about to open his mouth, an angry roar so loud that it could wake up the dead came from somewhere else.

The owner of the voice, wearing a terrifying Demon-like expression, was Megu.

「.....Hiii!? Megu-san!? 」

「HOW DARE YOU! LEAVING US BEHIND AND RUNNING OFF LIKE THAT!」

「W-W-We're sorry!! It's not what you think.....」

「HAA!? NOT WHAT I THINK!? THE HELL'S THAT SUPPOSE TO MEAN, HUH!!」

Pointed at the two, shimmering in Megu's hands, were her twin daggers.

Really, it's just like I feared, Megu-san is planning on finished off these two.

「And don't say that to me, shouldn't you be saying that to Edgar who ran over to save you!」

「Y-You're right! Sorry, Edgar!」

「I'll NEVER forgive you twoooo!!」

「.....Eeh!？」

「Wai- Hold on! Megu!」

Sensing the danger in the air, Suzu rushed over and grabbed Megu.

「LET ME GOO! SUZUU!」

「M-Megu! You can't! You can punish them after the quest ends! So let's focus on clearing the quest!」

So that means it's alright to punish them when this is over huh.

As an innocent bystander, Edgar mumbled this in his heart as he watched the exchange between Megu and the others.

Making a loud ruckus, Megu was busy raising all hell. Edgar took his eyes off her for a moment and looked over at the watchtower.

Maybe because the other parties already took them down, but the large number of orcs were now gone, and the sounds of battle could be heard coming from the heart of the watchtower.

The remaining parties are probably, they must have started battle against the Boss Mob Orc King by now. Even if we went over there now, we would probably lose just on Mob kill score alone, so winning is pretty much impossible. Things will probably end up with the other parties killing the Boss Mob, but, in any case, we were able to achieve our objective of keeping Suzu and Megu alive to the end.

I guess that's a victory in itself huh.

「Wait, Edgar-kun! Don't just stand there, Help me stop Megu!」

「Eh..... No, that's a bit.....I can't help you with that」

「EEEEH!? Why not!?!」

Isn't that like asking me to help calm down an enraged god?

I mean, just look at her.

The Megu-san right now, she's way past the level of Orc, she's even scarier than the Supreme Dragon Drake.

In Dragon's Krone, people often say that teaming up in a Party makes things easier, but when I look at these guys, I have a feeling that joining a Party is 100 times more troublesome.

Like for the Grand Mission this time around, if I participated Solo then I could easily clear it by myself.

Parties are nothing but trouble. All the more so when you party with people you know in real life.

Still——

Even though it was nothing but problems and difficulties, it was just a little tiny bit——
Fun.

Echoing out into the Field was the sound of Megu continuing to rampage, Suzu's voice trying to pacify her, and, louder than their cries for help when they were attacked by the Colluding Players, the terrified screams of Andou and Yamabuki.

And thus this marked the end of Edgar and Friends' First Grand Mission.

Extra TL note #1: So to clarify, The reason why the Moon Step is called “MOON” step is because the “pale blue light” that comes out of Edgar is similar to the light of the moon.

So last chapter when it said “The Moon was walking” was suppose to mean something like “the light was so brilliant that it looked like the moon walking [across the ground]”

Extra TL note #2: The last part didn’t really say Edgar and Friends, just “Edgar + Others”. But you know, I find it cute this way.

CHAPTER 9

EDGAR AND ARAN

More than usual, Ran felt that going to school was annoying.

The reason for that, was of course because he wound up using 「Moon Step」 last night when they were playing Dragon's Krone. Andou and the others will likely come at him with a barrage of questions as a result.

In the end, it was 10 pm by the time they finished the Grand Mission.

After defeating the PKers, Edgar and the rest of his party resumed hunting down Mobs, but the quest was over before they could even reach the Boss Mob. The end result: Their team was 3rd place out of 4.

The PKers that Edgar defeated were part of the 4th place team. Although he couldn't tell which team was the other Colluding party, once Edgar looked at the event points gained from dealing damage to the Boss Mob, he saw that there was a tight race in terms of points for 1st place and 2nd place team. Because of that he figured that the Colluding Party's plan didn't work out too well.

With their plans foiled, Suzu had reported the 2 PKers and the rest of their party to the administrators. Because of that they will probably be punished in the near future.

Incidentally, the reward for 3rd place was a measly amount of in-game currency. It goes without saying that Megu's rage flared up to the next level.

Once the Grand Mission was over, Edgar was expecting Andou and Yamabuki to receive their 「Punishment」 and then for everyone to ask him about Moon Step, but that ended up being a needless worry.

First off, Megu, who didn't have permission from her family to be playing Dragon's Krone late into the night, quickly logged out while simply saying 「We'll help Edgar level up tomorrow, kay」. Next was Suzu who also said with a smile 「See you tomorrow at school」 and logged out of Dragon's Krone.

Lastly, having luckily escaped their punishment, Andou and Yamabuki feared that the Terrifying Demon (Megu) might suddenly remember and log back on so they hastily said a few parting words and promptly logged out as well. And so, only a few minutes after having completed the Grand Mission, the only one left standing in the port city of Crescendo— was Edgar.

In other words, without even getting a chance to explain about the Moon Step, the party suddenly disbanded. Thus this was the start of Edgar's internal turmoil as he could only imagine what will happen the next day.

「Hey, Edogawaa!」

「.....ッ！」

In front of the Kasumigaoka High-School's front gate, the clear air shook. Abruptly calling out from behind was a panicked voice. Hearing his name, Ran reflexively froze up.

The person calling out to him, was one of the people from last night, someone who was with him in that other world. It was Andou.

「G-Good morning」

「About yesterday, thanks for that. Also one more thing, I have a bit of a *favor* to ask of you.....」

Andou looked deeply troubled, and his expression seemed like he was hesitant to say something.

Seeing him like that, Ran had a general idea of what he wanted to say.

「.....Perhaps, is it about Sasaki-san?^[1]」

「You're pretty sharp huh. Yea, exactly that, can you tell Megu-san with your own words, 『Andou has reflected on his actions so go easy on him』 , can you do that for me?」

“I'm begging you,” Andou brought his hands together as he prayed for help. Ran let out a small sigh.

In the Grand Mission Field yesterday they were somehow able to suppress Megu-san's anger, but that rage will likely carry over to today.

The way things are now, if he went into the classroom then he would definitely witness a bloodbath.

「.....Is it alright that I don't mention Yamabuki?」

「Uhh..... Yamabuki will.....We'll offer him as a sacrifice to Megu-san.....」

“We can't go on without making some sacrifices”^[2], Andou easily sold out his best friend.

If memory serves me, at the start of the quest, the one who lead the charge wasn't Yamabuki. Wasn't that **you**, Andou?

Nevertheless, to make Yamabuki into a scapegoat... You're a pretty cruel fellow.

「.....I'm not sure if she'll listen to what I have to say, but, well, I'll try」

「Seriously!? Alright, I'm saved! You really saved my ass!! 」

「Hey, wai.....!」

With tears his eyes, as if he was an inmate being saved from death-row, Andou tightly hugged Ran.

In front of the school gate were two male students suddenly sharing a warm embrace. Although the surrounding students were oppressively stared at them, Andou paid no attention to them and continued to hug Ran while vigorously patting him on the back.

Still, I'm a bit relieved. It looks like I won't be barraged with questions about the Moon Step.

It looks like Andou's mind was thoroughly preoccupied with trying to escape the evil clutches of Sasaki-san. The person in question, Megu-san, is probably also spending all her time thinking of ways to execute that 「Punishment」 of hers that she didn't get to carry out yesterday.

Suzu-san didn't seem that interested in the first place, and Yamabuki should be in the exact same situation as Andou.

In order to keep Dragon's Krone as a place of refuge, It would be best of nothing came to pass of this incident.

With his doubts eased, Ran smoothed down his chest and felt relieved.

However, the moment he entered the classroom that thought of his was magnificently shattered.



「Hey, hey, Ed. ya know, Why's it that you can use the Moon Step?」

「.....Uhhhh」

The moment Ran sat in his desk, as if lying in wait for him with gleaming eyes, Megu rushed over to him.

Ran had made a grave miscalculation.

He had expected Megu to have her mind preoccupied with rage, but that anger was but a small drop in a vast ocean. The thing that captured most of her attention was the curiosity she held in Ran.

「Ed, is it, are you maybe friends with Aran?」

「Eh, no..... well, I guess you could put it that way, but.....」

Or rather, who the hell is “Ed”?

Seeking help, Ran glanced over at Andou and Yamabuki, but they did nothing but join their hands together as if pleading, “Become our sacrifice”.

「Anyways, ya know, yesterday you were like, so super cool 」

「.....Eh?」

「If I had to explain how cool Ed was when he stood up against those PK bastards..... How should I say..... You were like the main character in one of those movies, going off to save the heroine, something like that?」

“That would make me the heroine~”, Megu made sure to emphasize that part with a smile.

「Ed is like, you’re all plain and gloomy, and you’re always by yourself and seem lonely, I used to think something like that, but now I’ve got a whole new impression of you」

「W-Well thanks for that」

“Somehow, I feel that you just said an exceptionally rude thing though,” Ran thought to himself. But since he had absolutely no idea what was going on, Ran just sat there nervously looking around.

Was Megu-san always this type of character?

I, too, have a completely new impression of you.

「And so, Ed. About what I said before-」

「Good Morning, Edogawa-kun」

While Megu was licking her lips as she zoned in on her prey (or at least it seemed that way), interrupting her words was Suzu who just entered the classroom.

It didn't seem like Suzu had any intention of asking Ran about what happened last night, and as she walked up to them while combing aside her chestnut-brown hair with her pinky finger, the female classmates in their surroundings faded away upon seeing her dazzling smile.^[3]

As expected, Suzu is different from the rest.

「C'mon now Megu, You're troubling Edogawa-kun so quit it already」

「Ya, but, wasn't he like really *really* cool? Ah, didn't you say the same thing, Suzu? 『Edgar-kun was so cool』 」

「.....Eh?」

「ッ!？」

After those words were said, the entire classroom seemed like it became entirely frozen cold.

The classroom was once bustling with morning activities, but that icy atmosphere gradually spread, and everyone in the classroom was gazing over at Ran and the others.

「.....Something like **Kyun~** and getting emotional like that.....Aaa, what..... Suzu.....**Mmm,Hmnmf*!*」

「M-Me-MeMe, Megu!!」

As her white cheeks were dyed the color pink, Suzu got behind Megu and restrained her, muffling her mouth so that she wouldn't say anything else unnecessary.

「Edogawa-kun! That's not true! It's not what you think!」

「.....」

Faced with an abnormal situation that he had never experienced before, the current situation far exceeded Ran's mental capacity. He tried to analyze Suzu's flustered words as if he was some other person.

What's that suppose to mean.

When you say 'it's not true', what are you trying to point out.

Or rather, yesterday, you guys, you only invited me to even out the numbers right? Now that the Grand Mission is over we should've returned to being nothing just normal classmates.

With the exception of Megu-san, if you're not curious about the Moon Step then there should be no reason to talk to me. And for Megu-san, if I said something like 「Long ago, I used to be Aran's friend so he told me how to use Moon Step before I retired」 then she would probably accept that and the conversation would be over.

That way everything would return back to normal; you guys would play Dragon's Krone with your group of 4, and I will play it by myself.

With that, everything would be over, right?

「.....B-But you know, Edogawa-kun」

Suzu's voice once again disconnected Ran from his inner thoughts.

When he returned to his full senses, standing in front of him wasn't Megu, but, bringing her hands together, in front of him was the figure of Suzu, with her head held down and looking somewhat embarrassed—

Peeking out from behind her chestnut hair, those upturned eyes forcefully caused Ran's pulse rise.

「Yesterday I talked to Megu and, we decided that we should properly thank you. For playing Dragon's Krone together with us, and, umm..... for saving us that time」

「.....No, you don't really have to」

「Thank You, EdoGawa-kun」

「.....ツ」

The sound of Suzu's soft voice gently floated into the air, Ran's cheeks began to blush.

Ran ended up thinking that this **must** be some sort of hallucination, like he was still stuck in the virtual world of Dragon's Krone.

「*Kufufu*, I'll say a couple of words then too. Thanks okay, Ed. And ya know, I'm not sure if it's much of a thank you, but when school's over today we'll go and help you level up」

「.....Eh?」

「Since we're only level 8, you'll catch up to us in no time EdoGawa-kun」

「Ah~, don't worry. Andou and Yamabuki will also lend us a hand..... Isn't that right!?」

Megu sent a glare at Andou and Yamabuki.

As if she had gotten a hold of their weaknesses, the two swiftly jumped to their feet and replied 「With Pleasure!」 .

It seems like Megu-san had not forgotten what happened yesterday, and was using it as an excuse to drag those two into compulsory service. I'm not entirely sure if that was Megu-san's idea, or if it was Suzu-san's idea though.

Girls really are to be feared.

「And so, after-school, is it okay if we all meet up again?」

「Ah, no, Megu-san」

Megu was raring to go, but Ran ended up speaking out.

It's true that level up with everyone, that doesn't have a bad ring to it.

All the more so since it will be with Suzu-san.

But, if I don't livestream as Aran then things will be bad. It might rub the people in charge at DICE the wrong way.

「.....Oh, sorry, did you have something planned?」

「No, umm..... well, I'm in no hurry, but there is an errand I need to do」

I can never say what it is though.

「I see.....Then I guess, today might be a bit difficult huh」

Megu let out a sigh that said, 'that kinda sucks.'

Having gotten the normally strong and forceful Megu to consent, Ran was feeling relieved. But, when he looked over at Suzu and saw into her eyes, he began to have second thoughts.

「.....Uuu」

What Ran saw reflected in his eyes, looking back at him in complete silence, was Suzu who had an expression that said deep down in her heart that she was truly saddened—

A surging wave of guilt was swirling around in Ran's heart.

Being swallowed up by that storm of guilt, Ran only had one way to escape it.

「.....No, let's do it today」

「Eh?」

「Like I said, let's go level up today. That errand, it will be fine if I don't do it today」

「.....Really!?!」

Suzu's face brightly lit up, and her mood rebounded.

Leveling up Edgar, and then livestreaming on Aran. It seems like I have a lot of sleepless nights lying ahead of me.

Socializing with others is truly troublesome. There's nothing better than playing a VRMMO by yourself.

Ran grumbled to himself in his heart.

However, he still couldn't resist Suzu's smile. Breathing a small sigh, Ran let himself be pulled in.

Footnotes:

1. TL note: As a reminder, Megu's real name is Sasaki Megumi-san. I really wish ruby text worked on wordpress... Would make furigana easier
2. TL note: "We can't go on without making some sacrifices" is the same phrase Andou used when he said "Ran is better than nothing" in chapter 2, back when they decided to invite Ran.
3. TL note: Apparently Suzu's habit is to comb aside her hair, not twirl it (I blame the author for using weird kanji to describe it). I made the change to chapter 2, and Here's a picture for reference to what it should look like.

